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A LIFE AND DEATH OF JUDAS ISCARIOT

By the same Author

POEMS AND SONNETS

ARGUMENTS AND EMBLEMS

MURAL PAINTINGS IN ENGLISH CHURCHES DURING THE MIDDLE AGES

The Bodley Head

A LIFE AND DEATH OF JUDAS ISCARIOT

BY

FRANK KENDON

The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst no worse, if imagination amend them.

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"If the Mind be possest with any Lust or Passion, a man had better be in a Fair, than in a Wood alone. They may, like petty Thieves, cheat us perhaps, and pick our pockets, in the midst of company; but like Robbers, they use to strip and bind or murder us, when they catch us alone. This is but to retreat from Men, and to fall into the hands of Devils."

COWLEY

PREFACE

THIS narrative in verse intends to supply a consistent and human character to fit the facts and limitations of a well-known story. The early incidents are all invented, and in the relation of the later incidents, where what is historical is mortised into what is invented, care has been taken to present the story from a new angle, to lessen, as far as possible, the difficulty of reconciling history and invention in the reader's mind. The changes that have been made in the character of Judas, as the evangelists report it, are, I believe, justified on the grounds of imaginative truth. The rejection of the motive of avarice, for instance, seems to me to need little defence. The loathing with which the rest of the disciples naturally regarded Judas after his wicked act hindered their understanding of him. The motive of avarice made the crime despicable beyond words, and it is an index of their hate's depth that they could impute it. But if we take into account the long service which Judas must have given to their common cause, before his downfall, and the fact that Jesus, who chose the others, also chose or accepted Judas, our imagination refuses to accept so inhuman a motive: the man who could be tempted by a little money to betray a friend would be incapable of passion or remorse. Judas himself could never have admitted it. But in rejecting this as the true motive one must, of course, accept it as an imputation actually made and honestly believed. Then it throws valuable light on the relations existing between the disciples and Judas.

A word or two here about the treatment of motive in the poem may not be out of place. In the last analysis Judas takes revenge upon himself. He is far from being a simple character. Circumstances (it is supposed) drive him into introspection; his whole disaffection is with himself, and the betrayal is an attempt, made in desperation, to prove to himself that he is capable of action. It is an effort to resolve his importunate doubts about his power, and his suicide shows that it failed. In such a mind, however, it would be impossible for this to be honestly recognized as the motive. The political reasoning, with Jesus and with the priest, is seized upon by Judas as a possible intellectual motive. I have tried to show how artificial and yet how reasonable this was in him. His passion from first to last was for himself. He was incapable of disinterest, although intelligent enough to see that disinterest was the only just way of life. He was always attempting to convince his audience, but he was not an ordinary hypocrite, because the only audience for which, by habit of life, he had any respect was himself.

The power of passing judgment is a little thing beside the power of suspending judgment. Judas has not been whitewashed; unless to explain is to excuse. Human powers of sympathy are constantly extending, and it may be that their growth is the best evidence of progress. But the full sense of that teaching, "Judge not, that ye be not judged", has scarcely yet received general recognition.

FIRST PART

A LIFE AND DEATH OF JUDAS ISCARIOT

FIRST BOOK

Judas, a boy of Judæa, in one of his solitary expeditions over the hills near his home, meets one of his father's shepherd boys, and they wander off together. In their excitement they neglect their flock, and when they return they find that one ewe has been killed by a wild beast, and the flock widely scattered. They succeed in recovering the rest of the flock, and by twilight they have them safely in fold.
Word of Joseph's neglect is taken to Judas' father, and he orders him to be flogged. Judas makes an appeal for mercy for him, and is shocked to find how useless it is. He witnesses the flogging in silence, but afterwards, in an uncontrollable passion, snatches the whip from the steward's hand and strikes his father to the ground.

A STRANGE philosopher, a boy of twelve,
Who saw a snake and killed it, in horror dared
To stoop and touch its sparkling metal scales.
Dead snakes make no reproaches, yet this thing
That had been lithe and swift and venomous,
Lying stiff now, with shadows of grass blades
Across its polished belly, bruised with thrashing,
Seemed by its slender and immobile form
To charge the boy with murder. He was pale,
But not with pity, with a kind of fear,
Which reason could not answer nor explain;

Dead or living, venomous or not,
He hated snakes; nor did the turquoise spots
Nor the white bands nor the black markings now
Stir his affections. But the snake, though dead,
Seemed an insulted evil, threatening him;
And where unwillingly his hand had ventured
To touch the body, damp defilement stayed.
A sudden tremor shook him with disgust;
But he, still simple, stranger as yet to hate,
Raised himself hurriedly, as though not needing
Any just reason for his loathing now,
Looked on the loveliness of evil dead
Once more, and so turned thoughtfully away.
His skin was fresh, not brown like all his friends;
He went barefoot; he carried a green stick
With which, small swordsman, as he ran he cleft
Imaginary enemies, or leaves,
Or fluttering cyclamen, or crocus flowers,
Or tall narcissi in the boulders' shadows.
And as he cut their simple petals down
A shout of pleasure sprang; but as they fell
A kind of conscience stilled the shout, and he
From being a warrior was struck tender hearted,
And kneeling, fingered the bruised flower a moment;
Then dropped it carelessly, to rise and run
Among the rocks, where quick forgetfulness
Loosened his sword arm and his self-given oath.
That he was proud he owed to parentage,
Others were brought to serve him, some to toil,
Some to bring food, some to attend his word.
His father's house belittled all the rest,

His father's vines surpassed the peasant's few,
His father's horse was fleeter, and his dogs
Were fiercer than the wild ones, and well fed.
This had been baby-knowledge. If at twelve
Questions arose, they did not trouble him,
And now free, free on the stirring hills,
Where all the sheep that fed, and all the shepherds
That watched them were his father's, he forgot
Thoughts that had frightened him, as he forgot
The venomous snake so lately beaten to death.
At every step a score of grasshoppers
Shot from the ground about him, their red wings
Rising like sparks beneath the brilliant sun.
Birds at his coming flew a little way
And settled again, to watch with doubtful eyes
Whether his purpose was unkind. He ran,
He walked, he rested. Lizards at his look
Turned into stone, or shot like darts away.
There was a lark that showered him with song
Out of a sky that trembled. All the world
Was wild with action—he like all the world!
'Twas not eyes' beauty, it was being free,
Feeling the wind, leaping from rock to rock,
Hearing the living song, that made him shout
And cut the screaming air with his green switch.
He climbed exultantly; and, not content,
Sought out the highest boulder of the summit,
On which he set himself, upright and proud,
Like a young emperor overlooking half
The world, his empire.
Silent for an hour

He dreamed above the pastures of the valley.
The treeless hills slept standing. Far across
The hollow plain he saw them, smoothed and coloured
By the fair distance, knowing every path
Among their invisible rocks, and every shade
Among the olives at their foot, and every tree
That marked the winding channel of the stream.
In all this sharp and thirsty prospect stirred
No sign of life, except a flock or two
Of tiny sheep cropping the valley grass,
And nothing broke the burning hush of day
But now and then the thin uncertain sound
Of sheep bells, and a shepherd's far-off call.
Hills, what were the philosophies of twelve?
Not thought, not sorrow, but a long content;
Questions the senses answered; mere delight,
Half understood, accepted without fear.
No constant reasoning, no doubt of hope,
No comprehension nor complaint of death,
Only the impulse inexpressible
Of life possessed; no heavy sense of time,
No scrambling after doubted future joys;
But everlasting Now—these sights, these tears,
These occupations, these delights, sufficient.
Such was his solemn seeming reverie.
At length, perceiving that one shepherd followed
His flock towards the hill whereon he sat,
Judas himself sprang down, and ran to meet him.
In the varied world
These two were wonderers, slave and master's son
Bound by their boyhood, marvelling together,

Playing together, learning how to use
The sling, and how to find the nests of birds,
Sharing their stolen figs, swearing new oaths,
Venturing into undiscovered lands,
Growing together by experience.
But one was proud, and sometimes held aloof,
Or took the master's part and bade the slave
Wait on his pleasure, as his father taught him.
To-day, being long alone, he was more gracious.
"I saw you come across; I was up there,
Right on the very top. I waved and called;
You wouldn't hear me, yet it hardly seemed
More than a slinging distance down to you.
What were you doing by the river trees?
Looking for snakes? I killed a snake this morning
As big as this; and only just in time.
He heard me coming first, and lay quite still
Until I'd almost passed him; then shot out
Into the open, straight for me. I tell you
He nearly touched my foot, but I jumped back
And beat him with my stick." He struck the ground
To show his action. "He was dead directly."
"When I was coming through the river trees,"
The shepherd said, "I heard the strangest noise,
Like a bird fluttering. I waited near,
Watching and peering about, and suddenly
A hawk flew up out of a bush close by.
When I went near to look I found a dove,
Covered with blood but dead. Shall we go back?
I left the dove there, and perhaps the hawk
Will come again—and we might punish him."

" Are there two slings?" said Judas. There were two slings.

Who can set bounds to what a day will bring
To two adventurous boys? They left the flock
Cropping the meagre grass beneath that hill,
And hurrying together, crossed the plain,
The shepherd leading, till they reached the fringe
Of trees along the river. There, drawn in
As much by curiosity as wrath,
They found the dove, and cursed the hawk, and waited.
But boys have little patience for revenge;
The voice of running water and the soft
Rustle of leaves outbid their purposed hate;
Noon's mystery provoked them. Up they rose,
In awe of so much silence, and began
To penetrate the valley's secrecies.
By winding groves, and little fastnesses,
The magic led them on; so hour by hour
They marched in still amazement, while the sun
Steered downward, westward, and the unwatched sheep
Strayed further and found sweeter grass alone.
Found sweeter grass, where flocks had seldom grazed—
Never unguarded. Hereabout the slope
Was rugged and forbidding; here the flowers
Clustered thickly beneath the ancient boulders,
Safe from the hands of idle folk, for here,
Where this forgotten, unsuspicious flock
Went browsing deep, were haunts of cunning beasts
The stupid sheep, hearing no warning shout,
Saw nothing but sweet grass. Till suddenly

A lean, grey creature out of his hiding-place
Leapt on the nearest ewe, and tore her throat
With his yellow fangs, so that the hot blood drenched
The grass and flowers, and darkened down her neck.
The snarl, the heavy impact, this was all
The others heard. Each turned one look of fear
That way, and flung his startled head in air,
And where he faced he fled. There was a thunder
Of bounding feet, a moan from the dying ewe,
And then the lustful beast of prey gave chase
To those that fled to the valley.
Far away
Such shepherds as were leading homewards saw
A tremor of apprehension move their flocks;
And turning, caught a glimpse, and raised a shout.
Then the beast stopped in full career to listen.
Far off he was; but only staying to see
The moving forms of men, he left his chase,
And swift as wind sped back along the hill
To shelter, in the wild and darkening rocks.

The shepherd lad and Judas turned at last,
Seeing how soon the sun was dropping down;
Fear lent them haste, nor did they pause or speak
Until a shout came faintly from afar,
A shout that struck their hearts with sudden cold.
Listen! said both. And again the shout went up:
The danger call, meaning that some wild beast
Had dared the plain in daylight. Fast they ran,
Stumbling among the shadows, nearer, nearer,
Till they burst breathless through the belt of trees,

And saw the shepherds with uplifted staves
Hurrying towards the hill. There followed they,
Only to find their flock wide scattering,
And one dead ewe still warm. The shepherd called,
And one by one the frightened sheep returned.
Eagerly, anxiously, the truants both
Numbered the flock again as down the slopes
They moved into the valley. While they walked
The light was dying, and the colour fading
From flowers they trampled. Now they neared the folds,
And heard through semi-darkness the safe cry
Of folded sheep. Their own flock quickened pace,
Turned by shadowy olives down the path,
Pattering a cloud of dust; and having drunk
From troughs filled for them by the tired boys,
Resigned themselves to safety, while the last
Echo of sunset left the opposite hills.
" Don't be afraid" said Judas. " I'll be sure
To beg you off. I'll tell my father how
I ordered you to come exploring with me.
What is one dead among so many? Why!
If I asked him for half-a-dozen sheep,
He'd laugh and give them to me. Now, goodnight;
Look for me by the well to-morrow morning . . .
Wait till I come!" he shouted through the twilight;
Then ran into the olive yard, and climbed
The little dusty road between the cactus,
Saw the low moon; heard the unearthly cry
Of yellow dogs out hunting; flung his switch
Into the starry air; lingered a little;

Then thinking of the prowling beast again,
Shuddered and made for home.

A servant passed him at the outer door
And turned to nod assent to one who shouted
Angrily from within. He heard the words.
" Bring him to me," his father said, and Judas
Guessed at the culprit, and the punishment.
What would be best to do? He could not tell;
He hung upon the threshold questioning,
Knowing his father's anger hard to appease.
Yet while he waited, voices from the night
Told of the need for haste, if he dare keep
His promise to the shepherd-boy. He dared!
He pushed the curtain back, and stood before
His father there. " O father, please!" he cried,
" Please do not punish Joseph. You'll forgive him.
I made him leave the flock. I did not think
We should be long away, it was my fault;
He did not want to come till I commanded."
" You little fool," his father said, and laughed
And thrust him back. " Wait here, and learn how best
To teach a slave obedience . . . Bring him in,"
He called, and when the trembling shepherd stood
In tears before him, bade the steward " strip
The clothing from the idle scoundrel's back,
And give him twenty stripes to teach him duty."
Hate found new harbour then. Young Judas watched
With livid horror while they tore the rags
Off his companion, while they bound his arms
And feet. He shivered as the singing lash

Descended; but he made no stir or sign,
And heard the wails, and did not fear the blood.
But at the twentieth stroke, as Joseph fell,
Judas sprang on the steward. From his hand
With a quick wrench he snatched the knotted whip,
And turning to his father, hating him
With all his soul, he cried, and struck him down,
And fled into the starlight.

SECOND BOOK

Judas has been a runaway for ten years . . . A seaside town is described on a market-day. Judas is noticed among the crowd by a potter, who takes trouble to enter into talk with him because his looks seem to ask for sympathy. At the end of the interview the potter gives Judas one of his finest vases. Judas goes away to the sand dunes, where he remains unhappily till dark. There a cry for help reaches him from a frightened girl, who begs him to bring her into safety. Such an event at such an hour breaks down his proud acceptance of loneliness, and powerfully moves him. Afterwards, overwhelmed and tired, he finds light and supper at the potter's door, where he enters and sleeps. The next morning he is persuaded by the potter to stay with him, and to learn to work in clay.

DARK in his heart the memory of that hour
Troubled his growing. He was born to be
A lonely man; but being fugitive
So early from the farms and pastures where

His eyes had learned their lessons, driven out
From walks familiar and habitual friends,
Judas had made a secret of himself.
Ten years had not sufficed; he could not find
In the untented mountains, nor in flowers,
Nor in the alternating seasons, nor
In battling sea or peaceful, any peace.
Hoping for love from trees and stones he lived;
The majesty of midnight broke his heart;
Dawn was a riddle that he could not read.
Ten years he tried if virtue, love or strength
Might flow from nature; but he found no answer

Behold, a market under noon in summer,
A city by the sea, built on the slopes
Rising back from the sands—a busy city
Of narrow streets and blazing market-place.
Here merchants, making loaded camels kneel,
Uncord their bulky bales, and spread their cloths
In sun and shadow cunningly. Close by,
The neighbouring farmers' women and their boys
Tether the downcast asses, and unload
Clusters of muscatels, dark purple figs,
Giant red-hearted melons, pomegranates,
Almonds and dates, all in the blazing sun.
Here sits the potter in his cavern shop
Spinning his wheel, while with clay-covered hands
He builds a crude jar from the lump, singing
Into the moulded hollow as it grows.
Over his work he bends, engrossed in clay,

No moraliser, yet has eyes and ears
For much that passes by his open house.
He sees the loiterers, he sees the stream
Of sunlit buyers and sight-seeing youths,
And often as his eyes drop down to work
Again, some image of the crowd, some face,
Stays in his mind. That day, indeed, there passed
So many by his doorway, proud and rich,
Or poor and happy, such a world in small,
As might tax many a wiser memory.
But looking, he forgot. One face alone
By frequent passing became familiar,
A man's face, crisply bearded, young and handsome,
Keen looks interrogating everything,
Proud, dark, scornful, determined, sad;
He passed like one who, having learned
Lately of some friend's death,
Searches, half-knowing still, among the crowd
A little longer; not so much from hope
As from habitual weary expectation.
" But what he searches for," the potter thought,
" Never had shape or size or being, save
In his anxiety. I was young myself,
And troubled earth to no good purpose once;
But now I spin my wheel, and pottery
Serves to engage my mind. A man might think
His life away, a man might vainly spend
His sixty years in begging earth and heaven
To answer riddles, and a man would die
Father of nothing, wise too late in this:
That hands were made to work with, not to pray."

The potter's back was weary. Through the door
The sunlight showed a richer, cooler glow.
At last, the last pot made and set to dry,
He rose and stretched himself. The world passed by.
He moved towards the door to watch the play
So long attended, and so well rehearsed;
He leaned against the pillar, called goodnight
To some he knew; for evening gathered now,
Flooding the road with deeper dyeing colour,
And making much of turban, robe and veil.
Out of this bright procession as it passed
The potter's door, the young man Judas came,
Stopped to survey the ruddy water-pots,
Then gave a pleasant greeting, and received
The potter's question gladly. "Friend," said he,
"Are you a stranger in the town, that you
Passed by so many times unoccupied?
Here from my wheel I have watched you up and down—
Forgive me—do you search for some lost friend
Among the crowd? I have lived here so long,
And know so many of the passing folk,
If, as I think, you search, perhaps my eyes
May do some service." But the young man smiled:
"I am a countryman, and find the crowd
Amusing. I have spent so many years
Among the empty mountains, that the throng,
Which custom has made commonplace to you,
The colour and the noise and press of life,
The jostling other men, with other ways
Of seeing, thinking, feeling, fills my mind
With strange delight. But there's a kind of sadness

In seeing others busy about their tasks;
To tell the truth, sir, disappointment ends
The day for me, because I came where chance
Might proffer—anything; and all day long
I have been sadder, idler, lonelier.
But these are follies. Bid me laugh them down.
I only stopped to buy a water-pot."

"A water-pot? Such things as these two boys
Have stacked about my door, I am too proud
To sell you. They are coarse, uncomely shapes.
Honour my shop and enter. In my heart
I keep an artist who makes finer wares,
Shapely and slender jars, clay miracles!
Some such pot as these you seek, perhaps."
And Judas answered: "Yes, I seek, I seek!
Miracles did you say? But bring me in:
I am impatient for your miracles."
The potter hesitated, for there rang
Harsh and derisive pride in those few words;
But then, remembering well the bitter hours
Of his own youth, he laid a work-stained hand
Upon the young man's sleeve; and both went in:
Seekers of secrets both, one safe, one sad.

How we love life, and seek some refutation
Of dreadful dying in enduring beauty,
Poor fated little mortals though we be!
A lovely shape may live a thousand years,
But he that moulds it, he that takes the clay
In fingers sensitive as clay is dull,

To-morrow, when men marvel at his art,
May lie incapable of pleasure, dead
As clay before he touched it. Yet his son,
Equal in strange devotion, knowing well
That same abyss, mortality, to be
His certain finish, looks and loves, and spins
The wheel again, and spends his earnest soul,
If not in hope, forgetfully, and shapes
More reasons for desiring not to die.
So in that shop, in that forgotten town,
A simple man consoled himself with clay,
Asked no brave questions now of life and death,
Having once bruised himself, was glad to find
A remedy in labours that he loved;
Having been moved too often by the clouds,
Turned to a vase created by himself,
And found in curve, and colour and design,
Strangely but undeniably, the same
Mysterious essence, beauty. Judas, too,
Could not but praise the potter's handiwork;
But wondered more to see with what delight
And trembling love the old man handled it.
Greed he had seen, and lust, and gluttony;
He had seen men in anger and despair,
Men mad for love of women, power or gold;
But this love, eager and content at once,
This love that had no leisure to demand,
Judas had never seen. It broke on him,
As, to some traveller weary with past storms,
Sick of eternal and outrageous seas,
Out of the mists the unexpected sight

Of home appears. For long and wearily
Judas had searched for respite from his search,
Had ranged the hidden countries of his mind,
Unsatisfied, companionless and proud.
Swift through his mind the recognition ran;
While in the fading light the potter stood there,
Holding his darling handiwork arm's length,
Tilting and turning the vase, seriously pleased
By the mere lovely play of light across
Its rounded smoothness. Swift behind came pride,
A foolish pride that thought this wonder weakness.
"What must I pay for this?" The potter smiled.
"Those who are guests pay nothing . . . It is yours!
Nay, please accept it." And he laid the vase
Within the young man's arm, and went with him
Towards the door, the gateway to a world
Of crowds gone home. Thence Judas saw the rose
Colours of evening on the whitened houses,
Saw the long shadows, and the astounding depth
Of sky above a town composed for rest—
The haunted earth, the baffling heavens—and fear
Wrestled with pride; but pride had victory.
The potter watched him down the crooked street,
And knew the swaggering gait, the upright head,
For old disguises. Judas disappeared.
The potter closed his shop; but left a way,
And set a lamp upon an empty shelf
Before he washed the caked clay from his hands.
Then, having eaten, by the smoky lamp
He left two cakes, and one of his best vases
Filled with fresh water on the floor near by.

Judas meanwhile made haste to leave the town;
He climbed by grass and sand dune, and the sun
Sloped to the sea, sipped, stooped, and drinking, quenched
The thirst of his long journey—sank at last
Into the water—leaving the still air
Loaded with gold and purple, and the sea
Flecked, in the concave of each creeping wave,
With borrowed colour. As for Judas, he
Could not forbear a cry, more pain than joy,
Could not take beauty to himself in peace,
But longed to hear some soul, near him but strange,
Babble surprising praises. So he spoke,
And nothing answered. He could hear the sea
Washing among the rocks at every swell,
Making the darkness poignant; and he lay
A long time passive, till the sea's desire
Compelled a bitter prayer to pass his lips:
"O restless, proud, invincible," he cried,
"Constant in thy impatience, ever beating
Waves of desire against a fatal shore,
Like love of life against the fort of death;
Give me the courage of idolaters
To pray to thee; for sick of God's delays
My spirit is, and all my fingers burn
For palpable divinity to-night."
False and unsimple prayers, and yet—O hush!—
A cry out of the darkness answered him,
A cry of fear. Across his selfish mood
It flashed like lightning. Springing to his feet
Before the echoes died, he shouted in answer.
His voice rose strangely through the broken stillness;

He heard it as another's, heard it climb
Vainly through the darkness, heard it die;
But when a woman's distant voice replied,
He ran stumbling towards her over the dunes,
Shouting to reassure her.
" The beast has gone," she said, when Judas came.
She trembled with her words. It was too dark
To see her face. " What beast? Which way?" said he,
And did not care about her soft reply,
Because high up against the stars he saw
The dark shape of a soldier hurrying.
Her hand touched lightly, and her voice the night
Made full and musical, though faint with fear.
Like scales his selfish sorrows fell away;
At the strange touch he felt his pulses quicken;
Strong were his arms to shield her. " Look," she cried,
" The moon is rising!" And in dream he turned,
In dream he saw the moon's rim on the dark
Horizon of the dunes. At last he spoke,
Wondering at his voice, as though it came
Not of his will. Then they began to climb
Towards the slumbering town, towards the moon
Rising before them red above the town;
And presently the woman let her hand
Fall from his passive arm. He made no sign,
Sensitive though his body was to change;
And she, now that the moon gave light enough,
Narrowly watched him. Presently she asked:
" What was the chance that brought you near?" He woke;
He turned to meet the question, saw her face
Fair in the moonlight, saw that she was young

And that she smiled a little. Lie for lie,
Amazed at her beauty, of himself afraid,
Judas said stammering: "Something that I lost—
A silver ring—I came at sunset time
To look for it; the night was warm and still;
I stayed to hear the waves and watch the moon."
Thus battling with a shadow for the right
Of power over his feelings, pride betrayed him;
Half of his strange excuse, at least, was true,
He flung this sop to virtue! But his arms
Ached for the girl's white shoulders while he spoke;
Nay, while he trudged beside her step for step,
The longings of a ten years' loneliness
Flooded his heart at once. O, not in words!
Is there no swifter language, trust by trust
Truly interpreted, and fairly answered,
Or was this but another taunt of life
Like the lost sunset on the spreading sea?
She wondered when he turned, and when he gazed
Full on her face, seeming to read her thoughts;
More, when he looked away as though afraid.
For she had never spent a day alone,
Never felt need of questioning the night
About a star or two. Here was a man
Featured like other men, who, when she spoke,
Had answered haltingly, but in plain terms;
A stranger, decorous, polite but cool,
Helpfully innocent of awkward questions,
A nice companion. So they reached the street.
She thanked him, bade good-night with a friendly voice,
And stealing to the first house of the town,

As surely vanished, and as silently
As any dream that ever Judas dreamed.
Breathless, incapable of thought, he stood
Like stone in moonlight. Echoes of her faded
Along the empty cloisters of his mind;
Faded and failed, failed and subsided, fled
Where knowledge, hesitating, dared not follow.
Slowly the crying sea-voices returned;
He newly marked the moon, the street, the town
Sleeping securely; then at last he turned,
Waking and questioning, to pace the street
Before the potter's door. And now a flood of thoughts
Assailed him, battering on his selfish pride,
And fear, yet vague and indefinable,
Fear of new forces, now in battle wild
Against his solitary fortress swept.
His steps were muffled by the dusty sands
Where, pacing blindly up the street and down
Again, in fever of the mind, he fought
The battle to its finish. Stilled at last
Were all the importunities that once
Had been his thoughts of God and humankind—
Unheard, at least, beneath the clamours of
A new and nearer matter. Sweet, thought he,
Her moonlit looks were, wild were her eyes with fear,
Her voice—how tender, her demeanour kind.
And then he'd stem the current of this folly
With worldly wisdom, arguing with himself
Like one in whom an evil spirit lodged.
Hunger and weariness, where wisdom failed,
Fought on the side of reason, drew his thoughts

Down from the battlefield. And at last he marked
A faint light stealing from the potter's shop,
Casting a trembling beam upon the grey
And dusty pathway; shining patiently
Upon him through the friendless solitude.
Wakened his only friend in this dumb city?
So many houses in the moonlight stood
White and unwelcome, offering no repose—
All, save the one where he was known already.
He tiptoed near, but no voice greeted him.
He stooped; he saw the lamp, the food, the water;
Hunger and homelessness were strong in him,
And pride was beaten. Judas for this once
Put trust in man, and entering, ate and slept.
The round moon swept away the zenith stars;
The foxes bayed her, but the town lay sleeping.
High in the palms, low in the olives, the wind,
As over the rocks the sea, complained unheard.
In moonlight earth grew pitiably old,
Stricken, and desolate, and purposeless,
Grey with endurance, wandering through space;
And the wind's sighing, and the sea's replying,
Though in themselves as passionless as death,
Rose like the grievings of insanity.
And yet the night was peaceful, soft the wind,
And calm the sea, and bright the watching moon;
And Judas, breathing softly, slept untroubled.
Just before dawn, like fowler to his snare,
The potter stole into his shop again.
But Judas woke at once, and would have gone,
Had not the potter spoken to assure him.

"Nay, do not use my house and leave me lonely;
As you have slept, break bread beneath my roof,
For where guests are there is good company;
But guests are rare. I have no son with whom
To share my food. But you will be my son:
You cannot leave unfed." And Judas laughed,
And was persuaded. All that day he stayed.
He watched the potter at his finest work:
His ready fingers, under whose caress
The very clay appeared to gather life,
His eagerness, his patience, his delight;
These things took hold of Judas, till he longed
To learn creation. Thus when evening fell
The potter found a pupil, and the youth,
No longer anxious to escape, lay down
Full of the thoughts of labour. So it was
That Judas stayed and found a second home.

THIRD BOOK

Several months have passed, and Judas has proved a quick pupil. He has spent many hours with Mary since their first encounter . . . Mary says she is going away. Their last meeting is described. A knowledge of his failure maddens Judas. In an attempt to assert his power, no matter how, he robs the potter of money to bring it to Mary, with cruel insults; and then having begun to run away, repents, returns, restores the stolen money, and leaves the town for ever.

"MAN lives," the potter said, watching the skill
Wherewith his pupil copied him in art,
"Man lives to be as happy as he dare.
It is a trick of our strange composition
To postulate some purpose. Yet the wind
Dies if it blows not, though its rising is
As secret as conception, and its course
As innocent of destination as
The curl of smoke driven from a woodman's fire.
So strife itself is life, not for its end
But for its action. That there is a god
Each midnight argues; but that God ordains
The petty steps we take, or cares a breath
Whither we pigmies burrow, any more
Than whither flies the wood-smoke, I have found
No proofs in nature . . . Press more lightly now,
Moisten your fingers before you mould the rim;
You spin the wheel too slowly. Enough, enough!"
Judas looked up before the wheel stopped spinning:
"Now I have made another piece of clay
Ready to catch the light for beauty's sake;
Now I have spent a few more hours, a few
More earthy hours, in this inhuman folly:
A slight addition to a shelf already
Overcrowded. Shall I say the rest,
Old father of dusty comeliness, whose loves
A Roman soldier in a drunken passion
Could sweep to fragments with his broken spear?
You've seen these beggars in the market, sir,
Black with disease, scabbed over with fat flies;

Or blind, and cannot think what colour means;
Or deaf, perhaps, and never heard a lark
Singing in crocus time; or drivelling mad,
Spitting weak curses at the thoughtless children.
What is a shapely pot the more to such
Poor shards of life's delight? God did not make
Your fingers or mine for spinning rims on cups.
And yet you took me in—a beggar too—
You could not live on clay, your flesh and blood
Drove you to more than pottery at last."
Judas rose from the wheel, and doing so
He stumbled, and his knuckles struck against
The delicate shape, destroying at one touch
The careful labour of an afternoon.
Too late the potter sprang to steady him,
The harm was done. But Judas laughed aloud:
"The doing, not the end!" he cried. "To-morrow,
While you are making market water-pots
At the great wheel, I shall begin again;
To-morrow is the day for miracles!"
He swept the crumpled clay into his hands,
Flung it upon the heap, as if to prove
How light his heart was, turned towards the door,
And with a scarcely uttered sigh, stepped forth
From shadow into evening.

Darker, darker
Grew the workshop; and still the potter sat,
Thinking of Judas, wondering what secret
Was hidden still. For he had loved the youth;
Living with him, had seen him rage and weep;

Had laughed with him, and taught him all his skill
In those four months. And Judas, still aloof,
Respected, but would put no trust in him.
Well enough he understood with what
Impatience Judas left the shop to-night;
He knew which way his path lay, and what hopes
A lover's eyes encourage. There had come
To his door one day a girl unveiled, too bold
The potter thought, who wandering on the dunes
South of the town (according to her story)
Had found a vase; and, guessing it to be
His workmanship, made bold to bring it back.
Whether there lay behind this simple chance
Of lost and found some previous encounter,
The potter knew not; but he saw, even then,
Even in the twilight of his shop, a change
Pass over Judas' face. Since then too well
He knew what made the youth morose and secret.
Yet wherefore secret? Thus the old man ranged
Each instance of the long acquaintanceship,
From the first meeting, when, beneath his pride,
He read a tragedy of loneliness
In Judas, to that evening's restive mood—
He saw a man in grievous battle failing,
Too proud to call for help.

The shop was almost dark now. As he rose
And moved towards the door, he lifted down
From its low shelf the last vase Judas had made.
Over and over in his hands he turned it:
"To-morrow is the day of miracles!"

Yet here in four months' learning, he has made
Excellent beauty . . . O old age, old age,
There is no password to forsaken camps.

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Places have virtue in themselves in love;
Whether 'tis self-deceit or truth, let them
Pronounce who have forgotten; for the rest,
If here or here sense had new sweetness once,
The place keeps echoes, breathes a finer air
Henceforward, is in some sort given a part
In the enchanting play. For lovers are
As their own actors and spectators, playing
The tragi-comedy, scene after scene,
Over and over, while the laggard, Time,
Prepares the close which they desire or dread.
Thus Judas played: with fearful joy at first,
Remembering what chanced, what word, what look,
How many opportunities! Fought indeed
As lovers fight; cast scorn upon his weakness,
And took himself to task for vain romancing;
But fought to lose. For, seven days passing, he
Repaired at evening, trembling as he went,
To the same dunes. There, having once surrendered,
He made a kind of pilgrimage of hope
Each night, until his weak inaction filled
His soul with shame and anger. Up he rose
At dawn at last, from bitter argument
And despicable doubts and self-upbraidings,
Resolved to fly; when, coming from the well,
With pitcher poised upon her head, she, singing,

Saw him, and knew, and smiled.
Thereafter Judas paid to pottery
More willing application, that the days
Might speed along to evening carelessly,
And many another sunset over the sea
Watched from the dunes; but watched in company.
  She touched him easily; and like an instrument,
A pipe that country shepherds play, she could
Finger his moodiness, could make him angry,
Or lover-like, or careful of his pride.
And this strange power—for it seemed strange to her—
Had fascination for her. Not that she loved him,
Or any man, she'd say, but it was cool
Out on the dunes at nightfall, quiet, too,
After her father's quarrelling all day;
This was the truth! What more was there to tell?
Could not a girl enjoy what he'd enjoyed
Before he met her? Whose prerogative
Was sunset or cool evening—Man's alone?
And Judas cast his own thoughts on the wind
Of his imagination. Light, like sand,
Like clouds of dust, they were, and made him blind
With his own passion. So the more she vowed
She did not love him, only the more did he
Excuse her words, and snatching at each act
Of kindness, waited long for her surrender.
Each evening he would leave his wheel, and she
Her father's house—the first house in the town—
He high in hope, with resolutions new,
She gay, glad to escape, a creature for the sun
To shine about, with whom the little winds

Made pleasant laughter, one for whom the waves
Melted in music along the lower sands;
He solemn, she incomprehensible;
He bound a slave of his delighted senses,
She freer than the air.
A freshness had arisen, and was blowing
Sweetly in from the sea, when Judas turned
From labour; and he laughed triumphantly,
Because his heart was drunken with false hopes,
And he was clean resolved—
Resolved—On what? To press his wooing home?
To win? What would he win? her dear assent,
Her whispering admission? Blame him not;
Reason's a poor auxiliary, and love
Demands no formula. Perhaps the wind
Blowing on his mouth so kindly, or the trick
Of chance that made his day's work go for nothing,
Elated him to-night. He passed her house;
Accused it, with a glance, of being empty;
He took the undulations of the dunes
With pleasure in every stride, till climbing one
A little above the rest, his courage failed, and
All his fine resolutions in confusion fell.
For he had seen her, glorious and alone,
Breasting the wind, upon the summit of
The last dune standing, all the magic beauty
Of the evening, where it hung above the water,
Gathered about her body there: The sea
In rippling eagerness beyond, with waves
Running in to the sands continually,
The tender coloured sky, serene and clear,

The playful wind in mimic battle with
Her waving dress, telling the earth, the sea,
The sky, what slender curves, what grace,
What supple form of youth her garments hid.
  Suppose he hesitated; there is fear
In adoration; was it not as though
One went to woo the spirit of the hour—
Evening made personal? Oh, doting love
So dazzling bright, so dazzled by self-brightness,
O Child Philosopher, half-mad, half-wise!
It was as though he trafficked with the gods
That moment, till she called him—flesh and blood—
Saying with much sweet music for small matters:
" You came too soon; but now you come too slowly.
Alone, I thought how kind the evening was,
I had the whole shore to myself, the whole
Long, quiet shore . . . Oh, isn't the wind happy!
Why did you come?" She pouted into laughter.
" I should be very stern to-night!" she said.
  " I shall," he answered. " All my thoughts till now
Were set on sternness. I have spent the day
Surpassing masters; I have made a vase
Better than any other; but at last,
In my foolhardy hurry—in a sense
It was your doing, Mary—I have spoilt it."
  " A vase, and then a sunset! I am surprised
That clay should disregard your sternness so;
But I am clay myself, and prone to crumble."
  " I am no potter yet, I know," he said.
Parrying thus, together they descended
The slopes of sand and grass; but when they reached

The firmer shore that curved before them, both
Fell into silence; Mary listening to
The pleasant noises of the sea, and Judas
Listening to the words he would not speak.
The floor was strewn with many tiny shells,
Blue as the distant water, delicate,
Closely whorled, fragile and light as flowers.
And Mary, as they wandered idly, stooped
To gather of them those of purest colour;
And these curled up within her hand she kept,
As though she treasured them. " You, too," she said,
" Choose me the finest few to take with me;
I may be years away, perhaps shall never
Walk on this shore again." She stole a glance
To see what mark her news made. Hardly a sign—
The faintest pallor came and went; he asked
Where she was going, how soon, how far away—
And then his arms were round her, and his voice
Was broken, crying: " You cannot go, you cannot!
Oh, if the world holds reason this is not true.
Tell me you test me, tempt me still, still playing
Dice with my love for mischief. Give me the shells!"
He trod them into the sand. " It is not true."
" What do they matter, Judas? There are more,"
She said, " and you must help to find the best—
Enough for a necklace—Will you? Now? Before
The light has faded?"
It was true! She looked
The very embodiment of sorry " yes ",
But would not speak it—asked his heart for shells,

With her hands folded, and her bosom calm!
Her white hands folded, and her bosom calm!
He stooped, and busied himself about his task.
When he had counted twenty, she still standing
In reverie there, he poured them out like tribute
Into her passive hand. "O woo me, woo me!"
Her heart was saying then, but dumb her lips were,
And Judas heard no other heart but his.
"They'll fade!" he said. And suddenly a wave
Of insane hatred filled him, of himself,
His love, his life, his littleness; of beauty,
Whatever that might be, tormenting him;
And his heart mocked secretly to say "They'll fade."
So back they two, the almost-lovers, turned,
He nourishing his vanity on anger,
Taking revenge in frigid "yes" and "no";
She cool and childish now. They neared the town.
It chanced the moon rose redly. Judas mocked
At recollection. Staring at the moon
He seemed to see the dark shape of a soldier.
"Do not go in," he whispered: "Wait; I'll bring
A dowry for your wedding." He was gone.
There was long silence, crowding full of fears
And questions without answer. Mary stood
Beneath the shadow of her father's house,
Wondering, watching the rising dazzling moon,
Waiting a long time. Then she heard him running.
He saw her when she stirred, and coming near,
Cast down a heavy vase upon the sand
Before her. There was light enough to see

A silver coin or two flash out and fall
Near to her foot. "Good-bye!" said he, and turned
Away as if in haste to leave the town.
But "Judas!" she cried softly. Judas paused.
She ran to him, holding her arms to him.
He did not move.
Now might he have her love,
Even now, as she stood dumbly there, he might
Cover her lips with sweet, with cruel kisses.
He did not move; he studied cruelty.
"Take my evil gifts," he said, "and let me go;
Make me no purchaser of market kisses!"
Some madness drove him out into the night.
The tempest of his hot unreasoning wrath
Robbed him of any purpose. On and on
In unavailing effort to escape
He wandered, till, the force of rage being spent,
He was left sick of soul, and numb with shame.
Then broken thus, because he could not cry,
Nor think, nor think of prayers, he threw himself
Upon the grass; there lay, as still in mind
And body as Death himself. He seemed to feel
The moonlight flooding him, to hear the wild
Unearthly howls of the hunting foxes rise
And die, and die, in deserts beyond space.
So long he lay there that the world to which
At length he rose, to him appeared remote
And unfamiliar, like the strange
And hollow landscapes of remembered dreams.
So was his mind—emotionless and calm—

With but one aim, as clear in his quiet thought
As, in the waters of a windless lake
Lies a reflected mountain after rain.
Return he must, return, return before
The morning broke to publish him a thief.
Past olive-yards, past solitary farms,
Over the crusted sands he ran, his shadow
Before him. And at last—the sea, the town,
The winding street; all peaceful, all asleep.
There untouched in the sand the accusing vase
Lay, in full light. He stooped: a moment's work
And he was hastening, repenting vainly,
To bear it back to all the home he knew,
The potter's dwelling. Yet not here, alas!
The bitterest wrong, though this, this bringing back
Of stolen goods was all the reparation
His hands could make. That he had robbed his friend,
Even although his friend should never know,
Was heavy memory to bear alone;
But that by evil thinking, lying words,
By cruelty and falseness, he had hurt—
Nay, studied hurting—Oh, past all retrieving,
Past hope, past comfort! He could sweep the dust
To cover in the potter's little store
Again; he could not stanch that wound.
Farewell then, sleeping friend, farewell the wheel,
Farewell the weeping spirit, farewell sea,
And sand, and city soon to wake, farewell.
He took the inland pathway; he was gone
Before the moon set, or the dayspring shone.

FOURTH BOOK

Ten years later . . . Judas is now a village potter. He is still capable of being moved by beauty, though he tries to protect his sensibilities by attitudes of cynicism. He is unhappiest alone, and yet incapable of the first concessions of friendship . . . He gives alms to a blind man, and hears a traveller's tales about a village prophet in the north. His neighbours are sceptical, or indifferent, but Judas takes the part of the traveller. He is affronted by Andrew, the carpenter. He gives hospitality to the traveller and asks him more about the reputed prophet. After the traveller has gone, the blind man to whom Judas had given charity returns with his sight restored by the prophet, and insists on telling Judas. Judas determines to go in search of Jesus, and leaves the village before the sun gets up, without a word to anyone.

A THOUSAND evenings, and a thousand more,
Each with some secret fire of wrath, or silver
Garment of peace, shone over Palestine;
A thousand nights gave counsel of good sleep.
Seasons returning brought recurring flowers,
That broke, snowy and gold and crimson, from their buds,
And shone and faded. Snow in Bethlehem
Was called a rarity. Year trod on year,
Promising much, and yielding nothing new.
For leaves fall only that seasons may remain;
Winter is death that spring may leap into life
With a million evidences drawn from death;
And new shapes are but old shapes, flowers like
The flowers of last year and a thousand lost,

Poor passing signs of everlastingness.
So Judas saw ten springs arise and change him—
So he forgave himself, against his will,
And mourned for lesser evils, and was moved
By many beauties, though no more to tears.
He muttered enviously to the olive-trees,
He said: " O silver cousins, happier fruits
Of God's fantastic finger, alive and quiet,
Creatures through whom the very stream of life
That runs through us, runs peacefully, O friends,
What whisper turns you grey when dawn about
The solid earth comes maidenly—what fear
Disturbs your tedious conference on things?"
But nothing the olives answered, not a shiver.
He said: " O royal flowers, what promise rears you?
Whence do you rob your golden crowns and strong
Pretences? Weep, or must I mourn for you?"
But they burnt on in fields, and flung their pride
Under the chariot of a scorching sun,
Dying defiantly, defiantly.
Birds were his masters as they dipped a wing
In golden light, and instantly flashed fire,
Or as they mocked his ears with sudden calls;
Swift lizards, too, and slow chameleons—
Old bodies gay with contradictory green—
And ants, bees, furry spiders, grasshoppers,
Scorpions and painted snakes; bright useless things
Each on one little life and death intent:
These were his instances, these shadows fearful.
See, from the hill how idly he looks down
Across the plain to village; hill past hill

To the pearl-coloured town, and hill past hill
To where the hazy distance steals the sea.
See how the noon, pulsating and alive,
Hiding the manifold creation, breathing
Of passing, passionate, striving, separate lives,
Laughs at his cold request. O living god!
Yet as the years fled by him, and the fire
Of youth passed into smoke, the less he strove
With angels for the secret name they bore,
The quieter his cries to heaven went up,
The colder grew his still-frustrated heart,
Till beauty of earth, because of death and woe,
Wounded, but hurt no more. And he would speak
To the still world saying, to spite himself:
"Strange homes uneasy dwellers make; and fools
Weep or curse, but believe thy repeated lies.
Yet there is peace to-day, so still and kind
O World, thou spreadest, knowing well that I
Am ready, and might fall into thy snares—
Might fall too easily, and take thy whisper
Into my ears as mine, turning what's left
Of love towards thy quiet mask,
In trust for thy betraying once again . . .
But now I'll neither serve nor fight with thee."
And even while he spoke, instinctively
He stooped to lift a broken flower spray,
And let the slender stem and streaky bells
Lie on his fingers; even while he spoke
His eyes drank deep of western light, and the tide,
So scornfully denied, through those betraying
Inlets crept, to satisfy a thirst

Which he had boasted slaked. Judas arose.
He shut his inward eyes and ears and longings,
And resolutely villagewards made haste;
Treading the impetuous paths that feet not his
Had worn, where other men in other moods
Of pleasure had gone before him,
Proud of their senses.
Now as he drew near
To a great fig-tree growing by the road,
A beggar hailed him friend: one blind and slow,
Familiar in those parts, and homeward bound
To the same village.
"Honourable sir,"
He wailed, "be pitiful! The good God gives
Eyes to the lucky, that they need not pass
Us blind men by—poor blind men, such as I."
And stretched his hands out, and lifted his face—
His pitiable pallor—as the last
Most golden radiance steadied from the sun.
The over-lonely Judas heard a voice
Familiar; turned then that way eagerly;
But felt a cold and sudden horror seize him
To see dead eyes, pale grey opacity,
Glittering undazzled in the dazzling light.
He hesitated, by sharp pain bewildered,
Then paying alms: "Give God the praise," he said,
And shuddered a little as he hurried on.
"That's proud self-poisoning," the beggar said,
Turning the silver over. "He's a fool
Cursed with another kind of darkness, doomed
To die of wilful misery. Ah, well,

Silver is silver; God shall have the praise!"
So he set out to follow, tapping softly.
Twilight began to settle. Another voice
Rose wailing from the wayside: " Pity, pity
In David's name." But Judas looked away.
A bonfire danced; and boys about it sang
Low melancholy songs, whose tenuous notes
Mingled mysteriously with cries of sheep
And goats, and the distant rattle and lament
Of an outcast leper; and, above all this,
The dogs' unholy howling, sound that struck
Some deep and ominous echo of despair,
Chilling with terror hearts of young and old
Alike, however familiar. Hurry, Judas!
The lame man rises from the darkening bank,
The blind man feels his way among the stones;
The labourer leaves his plough; a star appears
Above the village. All the world goes home.
Yet who are these late gossips? Hurry, Judas!
The firelight dances on their serious faces;
The tanner is there, he that leans back to laugh
At something Andrew carpenter affirms.
His reedy voice repeats it; but the words
Are indistinct. Judas draws near. His path
Must lie close by the little group, of whom
He knows them all, save one, whose intonation
Betrays a traveller from more northern parts.
Him Judas hears repeating marvellous tales:
" A wedding feast in the town, neighbour to
The place where I was born. He was invited.
Half-way through, the wine showed signs of failing—

Some oversight on the host's part. But he
(The servants swear) had the jars filled with water,
Ordinary water from the well, and when
They poured it out at his command 'twas red
And rich—a better wine than you or I
Have often tasted . . . True enough!" he said,
Seeing their incredulity. " You'd need
No confirmation if you saw the man,
As I have since. Tall, strong, red-bearded too,
Not unlike this late friend; younger perhaps;
Stately without any pride. Ready and apt
Of wit, though slow in speech. An orator—
A genius, some say; but it's not that,
'Tis something in the grave and steady air
With which he listens, something in the light
That comes and goes across his looks replying.
Power and friendliness at once one feels
In his conversation. As for preaching—well,
We have heard many, in the synagogues
And out, but of none other could such tales
Seem credible. With him, one feels that doubt
Is out of the question."
" Preaching," Andrew said,
" Preaching is not a man's work. Pharisees
Who learned their knowledge at Jerusalem,
And have the law and prophets on the tip
Of their tongues from boyhood, these may preach, perhaps;
Though, heaven knows, if truth be found in gossip,
Some of them boast more virtue than they need.
But out along! there's thieves in every crowd;
Preaching's their work. This fellow's not a priest.

Is witchcraft priestly? Water turned to wine
Won't lend his tongue much true authority.
He'll be some spender of his father's fortune,
Keeper of wits in idleness. Now, friend,
Answer me truly, try the case again,
Is not his inspiration—idleness?"
" He is a working carpenter by trade."
" Is he, indeed?" said Andrew, as the laugh
Went round against him. " Give me leave to speak.
I am a carpenter and, friends, I say it:
I found no time for anything but work
When I was this man's age. Can he make ploughs,
Doors, benches, chests—that 's the true test for him;
Not can he fill a lull at some friend's wedding
By turning water into wine. I seem to know
This kind of carpenter: a man who'd botch
The easiest job in woodwork, and be free
With consolatory excuses, preaching
The gaps he'd left almost out of existence."
Neighbourly smiles grew broader in the glow
Of the dancing firelight; every gossip knew
Of Andrew's failing. Only Judas spoke.
The last faint wash of day had faded; fire
From the boys' fire glittered upon his eyes,
Light from their flames lit his face fitfully:
" Neighbours," he said, " whoever this man be,
Prophet or wizard, priest or carpenter,
He is ill judged by hasty words from us.
We never saw him, idle or at bench:
This stranger did. We have not heard how wise
Or vain his words may be: this stranger has.

The wine seems unimportant: those who drank
Enjoyed it. But the world, God knows, is thirsting
For wisdom now; even we, who pride ourselves
On Abraham's parentage, are losing hope,
Our priests corrupt, our very king a slave,
Our prophets dead, our faith riddled with doubts,
Our spirit breaking. If a word of truth
Fall from a man's lips—even a carpenter's—
We dare not waste it . . ."
"And a potter's words,"
Andrew retorted with a sneer, "a potter's
Invaluable words and proud advice
We must accept without demur. Good sir,
The village will applaud you, and the boys
Will laugh and run away no more, no doubt.
It is my fault that I was born and bred
In this poor place. What palace of what town
Bred you, we do not know; nor for what cause
You left and came to hide with us. We are
As honest as our fathers! I shall say
As much for you when you let slip his name."
Darkness like anger over Judas drew;
It was not anger, though it seemed to those
Who watched him when this insult pierced his heart,
The shadowing forth of murder. He was dumb.
His lips bled salt; and so he turned away
Sick at the heart, the tempest of his shame
Driving him, like a vessel, forth to seas
Deadly familiar, empty to the edge.
And as he went, hearing no protest raised,
No champion of his silence remonstrate

With Andrew's coarse injustice, Judas painted
His friends in blacker colours. Each at each
Looked blankly, shook each head, but offered no
Fresh contribution to the argument.
And, Judas out of sight, the group dispersed.
He cried, although he knew not, he, the man
That had not tasted tears of grief or shame
For many years, cried like a scolded child,
And blamed the senseless world for bitterness.

Later he heard a tapping at his door;
" Sir," said the stranger, in his northern way,
" After you left us, curiosity
Died in their hearts. They went; and left me there
Homeless and uninvited."
" You are welcome."
Judas held wide the door. " I live alone,"
He said, " but what is mine is mine to share,
Shelter and bread and milk, and company."
And forthwith brought him in, seated him there,
Set the dull lamp upon its ledge of stone,
And proffered water. " Pardon me, I pray,"
The northman said, " if I mistook your words
To-night; they seemed both just and kindly spoken;
And I am full of news, though not, it seems,
For carpenters! At least, accept my thanks."
And Judas smiled. " In answering a fool
According to his folly, I deserved
No thanks from you. But when a man's entranced,
As Andrew is, with hearing himself speak,
And lets his eloquence outrun his judgment,

As Andrew will, it's hard for me to stand there,
A silent, smiling listener. I'll confess
To no deserving. Folly made me speak—
Our carpenter, not yours. Yet do not heed
His hot revenge, nor think as ill of me
As his black silences directed you.
Late though I was, and though he made me angry,
I heard enough to make me welcome this
Good chance to question you. For I am sure
Wisdom was never less esteemed, nor more
Desirable, than now. We boast ourselves
The sons of Jacob; there's a smell of pride
About our littleness: it is a custom
Our clever overlords think well to nurse
In us; but the true pride of race boasts more
Than ancestry. It may be sad enough
To see us kingless! But in Babylon,
In Egypt even, we did not sell our pride
For paltry comfort. No! we stood apart,
Thought our own thoughts, bred prophets for our sons,
Bided our time. But now our sons in flesh
Are bastard Romans in their loyalties,
Slaves in false freedom, slaves who have no dreams . . .
Whom nothing moves to rapture, nothing grieves.
Therefore your open admiration pleased me.
For villagers love custom more than faith,
Life more than truth, comfort above all else;
But you spoke eagerly, as travelled men
Who have seen unimaginable beauty
And tell of it at home."

"It is true," answered the stranger, "when at first

Tales of this man were told, as I told you,
I heard them as but themes for idle talk:
A carpenter who bragged about himself,
And warned his betters; one who dressed old saws
In picturesque new clothing, that the crowd
Might gape at him the sooner; one, at most,
Practising magic as old widows will
To force a reputation. But the name
He made among us was not charlatan:
Neighbours spoke gravely of a prophet sent
At last to teach us wisdom; till it chanced
My labour took me to a town not far,
Where crowds, I found, awaited him.
You say
I speak as one who has seen high
And unfamiliar glory. Friend, I have
But heard him tell the crowd a tale or two;
And, God shall be my judge, I saw not then
More comeliness than any carpenter
Born in a village might lay claim to. Yet—
Oh, how shall I prove it, or express it even?—
Dawn rises well behind your southern hills?—
Across the midnight of accustomed thoughts,
He broke into my shell of blind content,
With terror of morning! Yet the wonder is,
The man says nothing wonderful at all—
A bird flies down, and he will speak of birds
So that God's care of them, which we forgot,
In flight, in nesting, feeding, hovering,
Breaks the heart down with beauty, reasserts
His love's all-covering care, without degree

For king and beggar. Do you understand?
Thought burns so clear in his talk, it sets on fire
In our half-stifled minds the pure, consuming flame
Of contemplation. Priests speak ever of laws—
Of punishment for disobedience;
He, of the sweetness of obedience,
And love, which to itself is laws enough,
And needs no threat, and asks no priest.
Must this man stick to saw-bench, mending ploughs
And making tables, while the folk who plough
And eat at table dwell in thoughtless darkness?"
He ceased, this adding to the darkness softly,
"You do not think me mad for words like these?"
But Judas rose as though to trim the lamp,
And when he answered, spoke with measured voice,
Saying: "To speak as you speak, to be moved
As you are! Would to God all men were mad!
This prophet, for he is, deserves all trust;
You have so stirred me with reflected love
For him, that I would die, if need were, in the crowd
That follows him. But tell me more: tell me,
Does he not speak with pity for the plight
Into which we are driven? Holds he no high hope
That we may break from our servility?
If he wakened you, were there not others
Willing and eager to go the way he leads,
To shake the yoke of custom and content
From their bowed shoulders, lightly to defy
These great idolaters and their proud decrees?
Can Israel see the dawn and serve the blind?
Saw he no kingdom from those mountain heights?

Have you not seen the dawn, you who have heard
His prophecies?"
"Oh, many hopes for man
This Jesus cherishes. His pity is deep,
Deeper than heaven! Lying and tyranny
Despising, he denounces; his hate then
Is just, his anger swift and withering.
Truly I have not heard him speak of the yoke
Of Rome upon us, but a kingdom is
His constant theme. It shall, he says, increase,
For he told us of a grain of mustard seed
That from a speck becomes a flourishing plant,
Meaning this kingdom."
Thus to tire the night
Sat these two talking late, but went to bed
At last, and rising with an unknown day,
Parted for ever.

Now when his work was done
Judas turned once more at evening time
To the quieter uplands, wandered far in thought,
Impelled by vague desire to break from the toil
That held him. Neither earth nor sky was now
Sufficient, for he saw and marked them not:
His strong imagination was intent
On crowds and battles. Cries rang in his ears,
And even alone he tasted the sweet wine
Of power in action—he, life's fugitive,
A man of secrecy, whose sole reward
From other men had been their scorn, their fear,
But friendship seldom. "Ah," he cried, "for men

Fired by my presence, ready at a look
To dare what I'll dare with as good a cause."
Yet on the empty air his thought found words,
And again he spoke, none hearing save his own
Unquiet mind, which bowed and beat the air
As a young tree before the wind, a tree
That seems to rock in passionate self-will,
Straining against its roots. But yet his words
Are hotter in passion than his heart can glow.
Now homewards he has turned his steps at last,
Though the sun promises some colour, and
The air invites a longer meditation.
Past the wild fig-tree Judas takes his way,
Compelled by habit; leaves the slope behind him,
And not a glance bestows on leaf, or star,
Or any simple beauty. Far ahead
Some one is running along the dusty road;
The cloud that his feet bestir shines white
In the evening, while the steps he makes, so still
The world is, Judas hears above his own,
Even from so far ahead. But idly hears,
Nor quickens his firm step, nor more than once
Looks up to see the runner ere he turns
To disappear behind the nearest house.
After him, in time comes Judas too;
But behold! the runner breathless, with a crowd
Of men and women round him questioning,
Whom Judas must pass by. Still as he hastens
Along the narrow street he is amazed
To see each door deserted, even the children,

Even the dogs and gossips, all are gone
To hear the news, and stare upon the bringer.

"Who's the grave stranger, deep in secrets there?"
"Judas, the potter."
"I must speak to him;
He gave me silver. Proud though he may be,
He knows me well." But Judas passed them by.
Some called his name, but Judas did not hear,
Or would not. "Well, that two may not be proud,
I'll run to him. He never saw me run
Before——" And straightway made a passage through
The grinning crowd, and running, laid a hand
On Judas' arm. Thus halted, Judas turned,
Looked full into the serious eyes of one
Whose face he knew, a beggar who was blind
But yesterday, on whom, for sudden fear
Of those opaque grey orbs, he had bestowed
A hasty alms. But now this man could see!
Life sparkled in his eyes; there lurked a hint
Of smiling, and his countenance had found
A soul again. He stood, not stooped; he asked—
Not alms, but fair partition of his joy
With any man, as though he could not bear
The onset of such joy alone. But nought
Said Judas till the blind man's eagerness
Constrained an answer. "Are you not," said he,
"The potter Judas, who but yesterday
Gave me good silver by the wild fig-tree?"
"To whomsoever alms of mine were given,
(And though there is some likeness)" Judas said,

Grudging his senses' contradictory proof,
" I gave you nothing. He that begged was blind."
" O potter, potter, I, with what you gave
In hand, passed by you later, heard that news
Which Andrew scouted; and, sustained by you,
Bought passage to the famous carpenter.
His touch restored my sight; there 's news enough.
Call me ungrateful if I keep you here
A moment longer. As it fell, your gift
Gave me the means to greater. Thank you, then,
And goodnight, benefactor!" He had gone.

On dusty flax, this fire on Judas fell.
Yet to his solitary house the potter
Has turned away, lest breathing on the smoke
Of indecision, purpose break in flames,
And what he would becomes imperative.
Kind sleep came not with darkness, hour gave hour
Matter for troubled vision, with himself,
Towering high among the dim shadows
Of men who struggled, crying out together—
Till faint, far-off, sharp, level, clear, the sound
Of a trumpet rang, a blend of light and song
Dawning above the darkness and the noise.
Then Judas overstrode a thousand men
To meet the music, for it louder grew
Each moment, and the pallor of the morning
Melted as fast to daylight, golden, kind.
Again, he was high up, walking the crowns
Of smooth round hills, above a sea of mist;
And with whom he shared the deeps of morning sky

And air, he knew, before a look confirmed him:
It was the beggar, with his sight restored!
The burst of morning was a miracle
To both alike; but double was the joy
That Judas felt: his own (now but reborn
For the thousandth daybreak) and the holy joy
Of his companion, who with breathless wonder
His first To-day beheld. And Judas saw
This man's experienced spirit in one hour
Taste beauty—nay, so keenly did he feel
The intense rapture, that he fell upon his knees—
He, Judas, among the flowers—and to the sun
(Now poised above the edges of the clouds)
Offered a dumb thanksgiving. For it seemed
That both were blind, and both to sight restored.
Yet were his eyes shut fast, with all this world
Under their lids; for when the noise of birds
Crept in, like truth, upon his consciousness,
Judas opened his eyes and lost his kingdom.
What flicker of remembrance lights his face?
Shall eyes that saw the sun of heaven's heights
Content themselves with grey light filtering thinly
Over the walls, and dimly falling down
On bench and wheel and clay, and ashes spent
After last night's fire? Safest to wake to these,
To rise, to moisten clay, to cast, to spin,
With a thick flame of burning oil at hand,
That aids the struggling morning light. The birds,
However, insist on foolish music, call
Like children who have found a novelty;
Judas flings wide the door upon his dreams.

No neighbour saw him leave. The village slept
Till the first sunrays streamed on its white walls.
No neighbour met him, all day long nor yet
Along the road at evening, though his door
Stood open to the sparrows' bravery.

SECOND PART

" *Mieux vaut se perdre que de se sauver tout seul.*"

FIFTH BOOK

A Prelude of Intention. Judas meets Jesus. They talk together, and Jesus reveals himself. The following day they journey together, and as they go Jesus helps Judas to unburden his mind. Then, sitting down in a shade on the hill-side, Jesus tells him of his own convictions and his life's intention. Judas becomes a disciple. The loneliness and strength of character in Jesus are next displayed, but this book concludes with an incident which shows how little his most faithful followers really understand of the philosophy which he holds and preaches.

MUSE of our Race, whose secret being burns
Beyond the time and space that measure us;
From whom we hold our life, each man a spark
In his unconscious heart, whereof, by hope
Rather than knowledge, we surmise a soul;
Of whom each man to others, like a planet
Piercing the night of ignorance, dreaming, answers;
O Muse unknown, unproven, unfelt,
(Except by love, that cannot be content
With death's too easy answer) Flame, or Fire,
Or Life, or Light, burn and make these words
With thy light clearer; though I name thee not,
Nor borrow bodily beauty thee to clothe,
As simpler men in simpler ages dared.
Can these hands all human kind enclose,
Or verses copy the song of death and life
Which flies through day and night, through far drawn light
And darkness, through all ages where a life

Falling is known no more—less than a drop
In the unbordered and unsounded seas
Of Time? Spirit, perform this miracle:
Let tales steal in of universal man,
Whose sense of goodness ever does exceed
The best experience; for heavy clay
Drags down from high performance. We are not
Our best or worst—our worst has some excuse,
Our best some flaw,
Our darkest still some light of life from thee
Borrows in birth. We are a battle ground
Of dark and light, death and undeath. Our sons
Inherit thee, yet build for us a tomb
That long outlasts them. O shine down again!
Renew our spiritual eyes to see thee,
Thee in each act and thought and aspiration;
Even though we fall,
Some very far. Speak truth reborn for us
In fall and rising. Jesus and Judas both
Were men: our night is full of stars unnamed
And named, some brighter than the rest;
But many stars distil too small a light!
Fumbling we go, and barely seeing, guess
Full radiance.
Are not our brothers stars?
Even this man our brother, born as we,
As we are fashioned, mortal, beauty-led,
Driven and hurt upon the rocks by doubt,
Long trampled by the charges and repulses
Of flesh and spirit; doubting while he assails,
Back driven, faint and bleeding, from his own

Unmanageable hope; to waxen wings
Trusting too much; hungry and starved as we are,
Longing, and yet incapable of love;
Hemmed in by self, and conscious of the chains
Which are his own, and gold, and not his own:
This man indeed our brother, born as we.

As to some master of a ship becalmed,
Whose compass broken lies, whose nights have long
Been starless, comes a driving wind at last,
And brings his ship at noon
Into full sight of port; so came the news
Of Jesus to his ears, and Judas rose,
Filled by the morning with resolve, to leave
All past, he hoped, as easily as now
He left his wheel, his clay, his house, for ever;
Came by white roads, a dusty traveller,
And, as it chanced, first met beside a well
This prophet carpenter, in talk with friends.
He, seeing Judas parched and travel stained,
Had stopped his talk, and offered him a draught
Of the well water. Judas deeply drank,
Then, pouring water over his dusty feet,
Sighed and sat down; but little knew his search
Had ended, nor who asked him of the road.
But Jesus marked the pain of long borne doubt
In the face of Judas, saw beneath the strain
And sweat of journey, weariness that sleep
Could ease but not repair; and when he rose,
" Good friend," said he, " you would be ill-advised
To journey farther to-night. If house and food

Can change your purpose, you may find them here
In the village. God is good," he said,
" And gives all travellers rest. Return with me,
And notwithstanding haste, be well-advised;
To-morrow will be longer by good sleep.
For sleep I see you need—and company."
The women with their household pitchers high
Had said good night, the shepherds to their flocks
Had turned by then, for darkness promised soon.
" God knows I have had need," said Judas slowly,
Wondering much. They rose then, following
The women. Twice or thrice desire to break
The barriers of reserve grew strong in him;
For, still in ignorance, Judas felt the force
Of kindness in this quiet-spoken man.
" On such calm evenings," Jesus presently said,
" Are you not moved, as I am, thinking how
The traveller from his hill, the shepherd boy,
The women on the housetops, robbers, priests,
Soldiers and fishers—thousands over all
The level lighted land—pause in their work
To wonder west a breath or two;
Do you not feel the spirit of man's hope
Hovering rather sadly, yet still hope,
Above the earth? It comes to all alike
At times of far-off beauty. Then, if then
God broke the dome of colour and shone through
With sudden-slaying glory, would they then
Turn to their labour back, their shepherding,
Their robbing, ploughing, answer not the cries
Of their light-loving hearts? But back rolls pride,

Hate, envy, greed, and useless cares of earth,
Like sudden clouds sweeping up from the sea
Of fear-of-death onrushing—alien clouds,
And too-much dreaded sea."
"Yet death is hard,"
Said Judas boldly. "Sir, my heart, like yours,
Has often leapt to see the great west gilt
With light and colour, till, being beaten back
So many times, defeated, often cheated
By beauty, I have turned against my heart.
For all that seeming respite was but tears—
A desert heaven; and death's sly messengers
Come softly knocking, mocking at a life
Whose richest treasures, gathered with what pain
And love soever, needs must fall with flesh,
Dust to the sands, and water to the sea."
"When you search deeply," Jesus answered then,
"Much moved, much loving, is much sorrowing;
Yet truth perhaps hides nearer than you guess.
Ears, eyes and senses—things that fall to dust—
Are but our servants, having of their own
Pleasure and pain. But joy and sorrow—think!
What sense knows these? Search deeper then than death;
For even now the hand you fear too well
Is laid on you, on me, on those ahead.
Age loses sight and hearing; but there is
A sounder self whom years and sickness touch not:
Treasure of earth must die—it fades already;
Life of the soul increases and, I think,
Is armed, immune, immortal. Thus your sorrow
And joy prove but the breath of God in you . . .

O fear not little Death! he takes away
The sense but not the sweetness of our love;
Fears the west wind the axe upon the tree,
By whose leaf-stirring though made manifest?
(Look how they wave!) It yet has life apart."
A little silence then, and they had come
To the village. "Sir," said Judas eagerly,
"Your words give comfort. I could well hear more."
"Sleep now," said Jesus. "Let me go with you
A mile or two upon your way to-morrow:
Whither are you bound?" And what could Judas answer?
"To Nazareth, perhaps; I do not know.
I seek a carpenter who prophesies:
A man whose fame for wisdom grows, whom I
Desire to hear, being restless and, indeed,
Fearful of longer solitude." He would have asked
For any news of him, but Jesus spoke:
"I am a carpenter. I am he you seek!"

Day to his heart gave joy and stranger peace,
Such joy as never since the earliest days
Of innocence he had known, when to arise
And live beyond himself on lovely earth
Was all he asked of life. But though not now
Simplicity returned, he found some rest
From mental selfishness, the heaviest ill
Of man's mixed heritage, Eve's dangerous choice.
Northward they went that morning, through the hills
Towards Galilee, to some appointed place.
And as they went, and as they talked, so deep
In mutual thought they were, the sun of noon

Beat down unnoticed on them. Speech was free
On Judas' lips at last, at last flowed forth
The torrent of his doubts, imprisoned long,
And something of the burden of his pride
Of lonely-mindedness was lifted. Jesus heard
Almost in silence, though with ready thought . . .
" Therefore I came," said Judas, at the end
Of many troubles told, " having heard men tell
Your fame and wisdom; rather having seen
What change your teaching wrought in them,
To find you; and such labour as you do
I will do also, serve what cause you lead,
And learn my need of wisdom at your lips."
" What cause lead I?" says Jesus.
" Judas, wherever I go, I, that cry peace,
And know the love of God, shall bring a sword
And many men may murder, many die
Shouting my name, and fighting in the cause
They call my own. But *I* am not my own;
Thoughts clear as day, simple as leaves, arise,
Not to be questioned; yet if I were dumb
The crowd would not perceive them;
And dumbness is itself a blasphemy
Against high truth. Bear witness then for me
Against the sword, if go with me you will.
For whether what is true shall live or die,
He that sees truth demands not. In his heart
There is no room for darkness, none for fear;
Once lighted, though this candle be consumed,
Its life is giving light. Though some be blind
And cannot take its gift, yet it still burns,

And so burn I, so little do I fear . . . "
And Judas said: " Lord, speak, for now I tarry
Beside you on the shores of earth and heaven."
And being then come upon a pleasant shade
On the hill-side, where two or three green trees
Touched their light leaf-tips over an ancient well,
They turned together to rest there. From the fern
That laced the stony hollow of the well
Before them, sloped the hill-side steeply down;
And dim with heat the valley of noon, and deep,
Lay far below them, trembling, like a land
Seen in a great lake when the wind is dead.
But farther yet, across the northern hills,
A flake of colour, blue Genesaret,
Sleeping among her rosy mountains, shone—
Bright, as of heaven as yet unvisited.
Worn smooth with age, the sun-bleached boulders lay
Above them, sleeping, and in crevices
Among the wavy grass washing the base
Of every rock, flowers grew, many and small,
Daisies and spotted spathes of hooded arum;
And in the open pasture near the road
Blood-red anemones, and creamy bells
Clustering in spires that, stirring, wrung no sound
From the just moving breeze. But over all
Hushed the bright day her secret of delight,
Her secret of delight, desirable
Half-hidden thus, a tale she told of Peace,
Whose passing that way tempted all, and none
Could swear to have seen, yet could not quite deny her.
And Judas said: " Speak, Lord, for now I wait

Beside you on the shores of earth and heaven."
With meditation long, his eyes not seeking
The wide circumference, but bent to grass
And flower beside the well, the carpenter
Spoke slowly in answer: " God is in this peace!
Nor need I, Judas, tell you of the power
Of love—for love of peace, and love of earth,
Have long informed you; nor, I know, since youth
Have you been blind, deaf, or impassible:
And hunger and thirst of spirit is of God,
By him implanted; to him, whether named
Or nameless in your vision, ever turned.
But if a man might find content, as well
I think he might, in isolation here,
Musing upon the many thousand dawns
And noons and evenings of his single life—
All the rich moods of varying earth and heaven
Over this one dear valley, he would sell
That part of him most precious for the sake
Of false or trivial rest. And still the towns
Would cluster on the hills beyond his life,
Men dying, hating, loving, laughing, buying
And selling, though by him unknown, unloved.
He would but feed his pride in solitude,
And ' Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,'
With all its implications, would to him
Be mere dead words: his love would die of pride.
By steps, being men, we wind our difficult way
To God at last, and learn the alphabet
Of perfect love, through love's long practice here.
But he who fears, and runs away from sin,

Sins in his cowardice—and he who boasts
'I did not hate my neighbour,' having none,
Deceives himself. God's law is: 'Thou shalt love.'
This is the breath that blows upon the fire,
The gentle shower that falls at nightfall, cooling
And filling all the veins of earth, whence seeds
Lying in darkness long venture a blade,
A root, and gathering strength, lift in the air
Their tender leaves, burst buds, and fire the valley.
Judas, I know you have been sick at heart;
Moses was sad, remember, having sight
Of this fair land to which he never came.
Open your heart at large. We must go down
To the valley, to the pastures, to the towns,
And spend the riches of our exaltation
In market-places—rather to teach than lead,
Rather to show than teach, the omnipotence
Of love, meekness, patience, simplicity.
For this is truth: The spirit is man's strength,
And love his spirit's drink and nourishment.
Is not the law of God, so long expressed:
'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice'?
Better is God served by a Roman's kindness
Than fasts, and showy prayers, and scornful gifts;
Better a willing hand than many prayers,
A crust for kindness, more than an ox for duty.
Consider then, it is but honouring God
To know him in the least of these his creatures,
To feel the heart warm at his presence, turn
To a beggar or high prince with ready hands,
Seeing the man in each, the God in man.

Come, therefore, we must seek him by all gates
That life affords. Like Jacob, here we dream;
And beauty, though a ladder joining heaven
And the silent earth, is not for lonely feet.
Behold! In the far village, nestling there,
God labours in the fields, and stands in flesh
Buying and selling in the market-place."
They rose then, and by twilight they were found
In their appointed place. And Judas knew
His task was hard henceforth, but for the love
He bore that day to Jesus, doubted not.
His heart was high, he felt his zeal on fire,
His potter's days seemed far-off as a dream.

The fame of Jesus spread. Wherever he went
The people left their work and crowding came
To listen to him. Hundreds followed him
From town to town, thousands came out to meet him.
But yet he spoke not to the men as crowds,
Gave them no cause in which they might combine;
Rather in tales, a sower sowing his seed,
A wedding feast, a woman in the house
Searching for silver lost, would he enshrine
The truth with which his soul burned constantly.
" Awake!" he cried, " a kingdom is at hand
In which all men may share"— but many thought
If he would sound a rallying call and rouse
The folk that followed him with zeal, he might
Much sooner see this kingdom, nay, be crowned
David's delayed successor at Jerusalem.
Even his clear simplicity by some

Was called a cloak disguising cunning schemes,
For Jesus never named Rome's tyranny;
Yet clearly cruelty and force of arms,
Hatred and enmity were by him condemned.
Sometimes he seemed to fear the pressing crowd,
And often weary, darkness having dispersed them,
Longing for solitude he would steal forth
To lonely places, where in depth of night
Communing with the angels of the wind—
With fleshless desolation in high places—
His soul renewed her courage. For he saw,
He only of the band of men inspired
By his long patience, what the end must be.
A word, a cry for help, a bid for power,
And thousands would enrol themselves, take arms
For him, help him to mortal victory.
Lo, he had spoken of breath of God in Man,
Not in himself, and men were slow of mind,
Hailing him prophet, king, Messiah even,
As though he stood apart deserving praise—
" Consider the lilies of the field
They toil not, neither do they spin,
Yet Solomon in all his glory
Was not arrayed like one of these."
Must they be told, over and over again,
How they were kingly, how a realm on earth
Was poor beside their mighty heritage,
That God's least work, lying before them daily,
Was more than kingdoms, more than throne or sword;
And power of life and death a little thing,
But power of love a regency in heaven?

As prophets mourn he mourned, but no star saw
His tears: of them, in his courageous spirit
He heard the prophet's comfort: " Truth will stand
After the last assault" and vowed before heaven,
Reckless of death, scornful of leadership,
To be truth's advocate—making words his seeds.
Therefore with consuming pity he turned
A man to men again, and often spoke
Of the new kingdom, but with veiling tales.
Yet those who loved him questioned him awry,
Even those chosen twelve said: " Master, when
Your kingdom is established, shall we hold
Positions of importance in your court?
Who will be chief among us in those days?"
They doubted not his power, and what he said
In parables, believed implicitly.
To whom a little sadly Jesus cried:
" When, when will you, even you with whom I have lived
Two years or more, and told you all I know,
When will you understand? My kingdom is
Within you." And he took a little child,
Setting him in the midst of them. " Behold,"
He said, " Unless your hearts grow young,
Unless a man become a child again
He cannot enter. He shall chiefest be
In heaven's kingdom into whose pure heart
No thought of precedence enters." 'Twas a boy
Who chanced to pass just then, a pretty lad
With a torn cap; he wondered most of all
What the man meant, why all these serious men
Were looking down upon him enviously;

And when, the question settled, they released him,
He stopped not far ahead, and hung about
To stare at them, until they moved away.

SIXTH BOOK

A Prelude of Spiritual Adventure . . . About two years have passed since Judas and Jesus first met . . . A conversation between Peter, James and John in a house at Bethany concerning the loyalty of Judas. John is frankly hostile, and Peter is inclined to follow him, at least in talk, when suddenly Judas himself enters, worn out with hunger and fatigue. Peter sets himself at once to attend and comfort him. Later he tries to persuade Judas to give him his confidence. It is plain that Judas is contending with himself . . . On the following morning the thirteen set out for Jerusalem, and Judas, noticing the sadness which Jesus expresses at the sight of the city, stays behind with him and they enter into conversation. Judas tries to persuade Jesus to take political action or at least to make use of his obvious power over men to lead them. This conversation carries them to the city itself, but Jesus is not persuaded.

DIVIDING Reason's mists roll back awhile;
Heard ye the wings, saw ye the face of God?
Oh, who has lifted us, what tender grass
Is this that bears our footprints, what the air
We breathe, what light is this that streams
Over us men?
I saw a city built on seven hills:

The mists unrolled, a vast and hollow plain
Tufted with trees revealing, like a sea
Of breaking verdure far below; for wind
Waved them continually, though unheard
So high where I was set in heaven.
Hear of the silver river, of the round
And polished sea inlaid, and of the rocks,
Dark ramparts of that land of life, against
The jealous desert standing—these I saw,
And one of form invisible but bright
Who took my hand to lead me as a child.
Understand then, ye men, of whom he told me,
What voice he had, creating as he spoke.
I was afraid and trembled. " Cast out fear,"
He seemed to say, and I was not afraid.
And lo! the bubble beauty of a city
Of marble, stone by stone, wall within wall,
Tower upon tower, rose among the trees.
" Kings racked with death its rulers are, its hills
Have every one a name, as Golden Hill,
The Hill of Crowns, the Bloody Hill of Swords,
The Little World, the Lyre, the Grove of Love,
The Hollow Mount—and every age it falls,
And rises every age inviolate,
Stronger than ever. Go, and there abide."
But as I fell, " I will recall thee " fell.
Praise we that city's beauty, and the strength
Of the five walls about it, built so high
That even the wind's assaults were made in vain.
O Star among the trees! her temples stood
Fair and well built upon their several hills;

And pleasant noise of fountains arose there,
Whose waters, making rainbows of the sun
In their wide courts, through marble sluices shot
To traverse every garden, every grove,
And every street, with coolness and kind sound.
Who would believe the desert lay so near?
None heard, save now and then on waking nights,
The long sigh of the trees, when a great wind,
Vanguard of chaos, came and swept unfed
In furious hunger overhead. But at last
The King fell sick. Then fear in every court
Crept secretly, and dust untrodden lay
Deep on the stairways of neglected temples,
Then loud without the riot wind drew near,
Beating against the gates as with the hands
Of many warriors mad with prophecy.
Woe until dawn; yet by what gate shall come
The gaunt and eyeless enemy?
O sun in heaven, O setting moon, have pity!
    About the first long hour of afternoon
White dust began to settle from the south
Thickly over the city, and the sound
Of wailing died away perceptibly;
In silence and in sun the gate half-fell.
Then without arms or soldiery came in
Cadaverous death, and passed through empty streets,
Scorning the windows' eyes, and trod the dust
Upon the golden staircase to the King,
And when it was but evening slew him there.
Out of high heaven that cry, my loud recall,
Parting the veil of silence, kissed my ears,

And I arose upon the arid air;
Yet long before my feet had felt the grass
Of heaven's summit, looking back I saw
The trees tumultuous over the place
Of that dismantled city, and I heard
A cry without a mouth to utter it run,
Searching the gulf beneath me while it died.

" Consider heaven's lilies of the field,
O man of many parts, of one short life,
Consider the lilies, how they grow.
So grew the love between us! And will you turn
Sandalled with pride now, or destroy the flower?'

I pray God give me grace to tell this tale,
For Judas loved his master with a love
Strange to his heart, surpassing strong and sweet;
But who were these—these Galileans—these
Tax gatherers and fishermen, to whom
Christ told his stories of the king of heaven?
Little they spoke to Judas those two years:
Peter believed him a man sour with pride,
Saying as once they spoke together at night:

PETER
" Judas is greedy for our master's heart,
Measures his love for you and James and me,
And counts his tokens as he counts the silver—
An envious and unsimplehearted man.
Jesus is far too kind." But John replied:

JOHN

" Save that Christ's wisdom overlords his love
I too should say too kind. I cannot wring
An honest word from Judas. Is he dumb,
Or overburdened with his earthly cares?
I love my enemies more easily
Than I love him. See how, but yesterday,
He made pretence of sour farsightedness,
Grumbling about the cost of spikenard.
Nothing's too costly to do Jesus praise!
I almost hated him for that wise fault.
No one could help but ask 'Who keeps the purse?'"

To this, forbearing James slowly returned:

JAMES

" O kill that question, boy, with one more kind.
How can the chilly sin of avarice
Lie at the door of one whom Jesus chose,
As he chose us, for love? There is a sense
In which his protest justifies itself—
The times are ominous, no man of us
But feels the shadow of advancing change.
Jesus himself speaks constantly of death.
Remember we have left the country places,
This is the stronghold of the priests, whose hate
And cunning are the customs of the town.
Here we need money more. I do not say
Provision is our law, but Judas—he's
A reasoner, and knows the need first hand."

JOHN

" He pleaded for the poor, not for ourselves."

JAMES
" A better motive."

JOHN
" Yet he was rebuked!
At such a time, and from a woman's hands,
Love's great excess forgave the excessive gift,
And it was mean of spirit in the man
So to protest. If he had loved, indeed,
His thoughts would not begrudge the costliest gift,
The world would seem too small!"

JAMES
" Not being Judas, can you weigh his love?
He, being older, threw away more years
Than you—and yet you do him this despite:
To fit ill motives to a deed that will
Bear better motives better.
Words ill-timed he spoke, but not ill-meant."

PETER
" We pass no judgment—yet the man is proud.
Why else so secret with us? We are all
In hope and jeopardy together, friends
And disciples all. For my part, then,
I do not care who knows which way I lean,
Nor by what open star of God I steer
My course. Nor you, James: you are frank;
Nor you, John. But I would I might strike fire
From Judas too, to know his heart's desire."
There Peter ended. He spoke musingly
With downcast eyes, which when he raised beheld
Pale Judas standing by—a smiling shadow,

Tall at his shoulder, haggard and unkempt,
Who moved his lips, but could not utter a word.
His head was bowed a little, his body swayed,
And Peter sprang to steady him, laying hands
On his weak arms. In Peter's place he sank
And when he had found breath, weakly spoke, saying:

JUDAS
" I am hungry. I have been far to-day
And have not tasted bread or water since
We fed last night."
Then Peter brought him food
And cared for him, washing his dusty feet.

PETER
" Where have you been to-day, so far afield?"

JUDAS
" Northward near Jordan and its trees."

PETER
" Alone?"

JUDAS
" You speak as though man may not live alone."

PETER
" Judas, forgive me, we are risking all
Here in the very camp of our worst foes,
And you are of us, chosen, called to bear
A sword of love against a sword of steel.
Why do you shut your thoughts away, or leave
Your friends, who need all courage, in the face
Of storms more threatening than have ever burst
On boats drifting in unfrequented seas?

We bitterly need all hands—
We bitterly need each other's confidence."
Judas replied with soft but scornful words:

JUDAS
" Yes, truth, our danger is and must be great,
But then our cause is greater. If we fail,
Not by my fault or cowardice I swear.
Peter, we dare not sail against so strong,
So fair a wind—and yet we do, we do.
Surely you know the need for solitude,
You, once a fisherman! Was never war
Brisk in your mind? A furious war filled mine."

PETER
" War to what end?"

JUDAS
" It is my own affair."

PETER
" All our affairs are yours. You have the right
To spill your troubles. Man, is this a time
For personal turmoil, when the cunning priests
Make nets for Jesus? If there must be fighting,
Fight on our side!"

JUDAS
" I do, I fought alone,
Not in the cause we share, though for the cause.
'Tis mightier than its champions. Peter, I,
A soul cursed with reserves, am not yet mad.
I see a man in grievous battle failing,
Too proud to call for help. Remember this.
I am too weary now for much but sleep."

PETER

" Yet speak a little. Lighten with a word
The fearful wrong we do you in this darkness:
To read your riddles crookedly, to doubt
Your love. You know he talks to us of death."

JUDAS

" Who talks of death? Listen, if my locked lips
Betrayed—no, not so deep—unloosed my thought,
The words I spoke would fester in your mind,
You need your truths in parables portrayed.
Nevertheless there is a kind of pride
That feeds on martyrdom—a madness rather
That fattens on the carrion of despair,
And sees more selfish glory in defeat—
Sobbing, unfortunate, misjudged defeat!—
Than glowing victory. Who talks of death?
The cause of Israel is a lion's cause,
The day is ours; but if we die, we lose!
What do *you* fear from priests and governors?
Remember for your comfort how he rode
In triumph to this Camp, this governed place.
And, think, were you a priest, or one in power,
Whether to kill would not the more inflame
Our shouting thousands. Hush, then, hush your fears.
All the uneasy world will come, Peter,
All the world to our need, if he but call them!—
Now give us rest, and mend our courage, O God."

And presently the war gave place to quiet
In Judas' mind, and Peter's doubt to sleep.
Then the whole house was peaceful. But with day

The shape of fear returned. Yet forth they went,
A band of country folk and dreamers, boldly
Advancing twelve against outnumbering pride.
And fair across the valley the city awaited
Their small invasion. Peaceable and pleasant
Her aspect in the morning, wide the gate
Where they must enter, though her walls grew steep
On the steep hill-side that the Temple crowned.
" Dream on under your dawn, Jerusalem,
Daughter of God grown careless of her love,
I come to you now," said Jesus, half aloud,
" With more than the sun to offer, yet you awake not;
I come with life in my hands and you refuse me;
I come with water and you would rather thirst;
With news of the city of God to a city of stone;
From the kingdom of heaven, but you have chosen earth.
Then scatter the seeds to the wind, the seeds that here
May find as yet no soil for their roots; and still,
Calm city of proud denial,
The ills you do me shall be winds to plant
The germs of heaven more widely. O, deny me,
Yet when these shining pinnacles are razed
And weeds of ruin lace your broken walls,
Your name shall be a radiant title for
The citadel of God." And of the twelve
That heard him mourn for earth's Jerusalem,
Eleven heard with sorrow. Down they passed
Over the road, and in and out among
The olives, whispering. But Jesus lingered.
And Judas saw him, how reluctantly
He left the vision. For, as they moved down,

The opposing city sank behind her walls,
Lower at every step. So Judas turned
Back from the company and came to walk
By the arm of Jesus, meeting not his eyes.

JESUS
" You were very weary yesterday?"

JUDAS
" I had walked far."

JESUS
" Were you again alone?"

JUDAS
" Most lonely."

JESUS
" Had you much that troubled you?"

JUDAS
" Not more than troubles all: our wilful loss."

JESUS
" You feel it deeply, Judas. There is death,
Hung like a mist above Jerusalem,
Threatening us. Is this thing in your thought?"

JUDAS
" It is no moment now to tremble at death.
O Master, death was not my cogitation;
But that you spoke of dying. Hear me now,
As you were once my comrade in the hills
Above your Galilee, before this folly,
As you were once my friend and bore with all
My secrets kindly, listen to me again.
Unsimple call me, Peter I am not,

Nor the youth John, nor that old kindness James,
And well you know, when they were thinking of crowns,
Thrones and dominions, I saw deeper things.
I boast not, saying I am more endowed
Than they with understanding. It is a gift
Heaven should take pride in."

JESUS

" Yet you seem to boast."

JUDAS

" Are you too wise then? Oh, I am sick of faults,
And passive silence, and the constant sense
Of being borne with as an exercise,
And holy love, that apes a warmth with smiling!
And I am sick of patience, passive, mild,
Long-suffering attachment to cold truth.
And I am sick of iterative words.
Be my physician, having been my friend."

JESUS

" I am sorry, Judas; you have suffered much.
Yet as I held you first I hold you still—
Speak with what openness may free you from
This burden. See, the others gain from us,
And cannot overhear you. There is time."

JUDAS

" O then, I think of kingdoms now, of earth
As well as heaven. And again, again
Hear captive Israel in Babylon
Singing their songs of liberty, their lips
No better than the bitten lips of slaves.
I hear the cries of poverty, and see

The floggings of injustice and the pomp
Of godless soldiery, into whose hands
More power and more for cruelty is fallen.
I see that we stand by, bewailing not
The people's anguish, but the people's deafness;
We hold out heaven to those that have no earth,
And fire with hopes of cloudy home a race
Whose patrimony is stolen from their hands.
We, who could free them, wait about like cowards,
Mourning our death to come. And while we sulk
The time goes by, goes by uncalled. For you,
To whom all government of hearts was given,
You, from whose lips the lightest word were fire
Upon their tinder passions, will not speak.
Well, then, must I? I am your follower
By virtue of that gift you have, hard stone
Wrought into swift and fluctuating heat
By your prophetic character; O Christ,
Betray your leadership no more, bespeak
Their courage, rouse them—king them—set them free!"

JESUS

"That battle's fought, and that presumptuous king
Laid where his iron nature must have brought him.
Your anger is not honest. Half these tears
Forget their source. They cannot move me now.
Truth is not shouted in a battle-cry,
But dwelt upon in calm. Truth wears no crown—
Or wearing one forgets its weight, and fears.
No, Judas, if you weep for Israel,
Weep for mankind. The sorrows of a man
Dwell in his heart, not in his government,

Nor are we sent against his government,
To drive out Romans. Israel's freedom lies
Elsewhere. It lies in heaven, not in Judæa."

JUDAS

"It is incredible that you, so wise
In other matters, should not see in this
A way to serve your cause. We little men
Must climb our mountains, you would leap at once
Into the vale of universal freedom.
But king become, and all your words are law,
You can do then such services to truth
As may rebuild a nation. God endowed
Your presence with its power over men's hearts
For some sure purpose. You despise it so
That one might think the mere possession sin.
All Israel would attend you if you freed them:
They might, they must, accord your wisdom then
Its proper hearing. Now—a leper hears,
A beggar begs, a fisher understands,
But the great trodden mass of men forgets you.
Not power, but power misused shall be their curse,
For some one leads them, priest or Christ or Cæsar:
Priest into ignorance, Rome into slavery, you into freedom."

JESUS

"This crooked path can never lead us home.
There was a prince who wished to go to war,
He therefore sent his ministers and bade
All loyal subjects arm, and on a day
Appointed they would fight, he said. But who
Of all his subjects came to keep that match?

None came, for none desired. Then counsel took
That king, and one advised him: Be discreet,
Offer a feast in such and such a place,
Then, when the guests are come, arm every one
For battle, and your army shall suffice.
Yet it sufficed not, for they had no heart.
What kind of man this prince was, though his war
Were never so just, ask them whom he misled.
The crooked way can never lead us home.
Have you not understood? A thousand times
The Devil has upbraided me as you have.
Power, power that the stretching forth of hands
Might give to me to make men follow me,
This is his sharpest lance of all. Cease, then,
To urge expedients. We are all men,
And would have others tread the path we take,
Not driven, not led, but freely of their own choice."

JUDAS

"Here, then," said Judas, "our adventure ends,
Not gloriously—as often you foretold
In earlier days, when with your power you bought
My fealty—but ignominiously.
Here, for your scorn of worldly wisdom, falls
Israel, that had hope, to sullen ruin.
And we shall be a tale for half a year
Told by centurions in idleness.
For what are words? And what are parables?
They die already on the very ears
That start to hear them. 'Love your enemies!'
Your enemy burns your corn, or steals your sheep,
Defiles your daughter, or enslaves your son.

It is not in man's power to love like this.
I would that I might hate you now, and go;
But it's as hard to hate one's friends as love
One's enemies. . . They wait for us. I thought
A more victorious entry might have served to-day."

JESUS

"Oh, that you might but burn with fire within,
Not warm your hands at my poor fervour thus.
When asked I loyalty, when sought from men
This personal praise that feeds my dying-part?
Things visible are weak, but powers unseen,
Like that which moves midnight upon its hinges,
Are the great masters. Life and Death are dark,
Man's senses never catch at them, but these—
And not the gaudy following of a court—
Are the great movers. More than these is Faith,
Which wakes the sun, and sets the sun for sleep.
Mark what I tell you, Judas, of this faith:
It is the authority of the secret spirit,
Everyman's sceptre, lying in the dust
Unwielded. Yet if you had faith
And, knowing, bade the heavy hills of Zion
Remove and cast themselves into the sea,
This were a little thing for faith to do.
What weakness, having this, is proved in us
If we resort to swords, rewards, and shouts.
But argument is vain. When I, awake,
Would turn you dawnwards, you do shut your eyes.
Alas, that he whose mind has keenest edge
Of all that labour with me, misconstrues me.
Let us have no more words—no more reproof.

Dark though the hour appear for us, it is
Our heaven's dayspring."
Thus they joined the rest,
Whose questioning voices fell on Judas' ears
Saying, " Master, where shall we go?" " Master,
What shall we do?" " What answer when men ask?"
And each in turn attended, answered each
According to his fear. The jealous heart
Of Judas sneered at all their simple trust,
And though he followed silently, his lips
Muttered against them, hating them like thieves.
Till to the Temple steps they came, and still
He nursed his own neglect and would not speak.

SEVENTH BOOK

Jesus and the disciples are standing at the foot of the steps leading up to the Temple. Jesus begins to address the people, but priests descend upon the little crowd from the Temple above, and try to silence Jesus by questions about his authority. Jesus replies with the parable of the wicked husbandmen, and then turns upon the priests in anger. When the crowd has gone, Jesus sends his disciples about the city to spend the day in teaching; but a young priest seizes this opportunity of leading Judas aside, and then proceeds to unfold a plan whereby Judas, perhaps, will supplant Jesus as leader of the common people, and a rebellion against Rome will be begun. Judas gives no sort of consent, he is guarded in everything he says. The priest leaves him with the thought of treachery stifled but alive in his mind.

ABOUT them where they stood the city walked:
The coloured crowd passed in and out of the bright
And shadowy streets. Steep streets and narrow,
Climbing the hill, poured out, on business bent,
Merchants in flowing many-coloured robes.
Tanned bearded faces, careless of the scene,
Passed the forlorn disciples: coming, going,
In twos or threes, immersed in talk or thought,
Some hurrying, some tarrying, some returning.
Beggars limped by, or blind men felt the walls,
Boys, scattering, ran, and shouting, disappeared,
And women, in their soiled uncoloured dress,
Kept to the shades of houses, silent ghosts
Bearing their babes, or vessels filled with corn.
Folk of all statures, men of all degrees,
Lives of all moods, all ages, all desires,
But each intent upon the purpose of
His little hour, as though a bargain driven
Was all the glorious morning's purpose too.
They were as slaves, so born, who spread the feast
For their insatiable tyrant, Death;
Riches they loved, and laid upon the board
Gold and the bakemeats of anxiety;
They were engrossed in pouring out bright wine
Of passing comforts, that, in drinking deep,
The tyrant's voice might terrify them less.
For this is life to many, fearful life:
The staving off of hunger and all thought
Of what must break this purposeless defence.
Oh, snatch at loveliness, it is the soul's
Habiliment and nurture, her delight,

Her calm delight, her inward sustenance
And drink. Look not at earth to covet earth;
But stand apart, seeing how small she lies
In God's extended palm, and take the measure
Of all long thoughts in peace. Be pitiful,
It is the kiss of God that man bestows;
Be merciful, it is the might of God;
Oh, hush the clamour of these, death's affairs,
Be quiet, it is heaven's full harmony.

Now here and there among the crowd one saw
The open countenance of wonder pass;
Some souls as yet not deafened by the noise
Of worldly care, mere idlers and onlookers,
Drew near the group of watchers by the steps;
Or here and there the face of one perplexed
By heaven and earth, disputing for his hours.
And at last Jesus raised his voice among
The bustle of the world, to tell them tales.
The crowd drew near him, curiosity
Gave way to interest; twenty, thirty, fifty
Were listening now, and every one that passed,
Merchant or priest or labourer, tiptoed
To see the speaker. So the word went round
About the Galilean, that had ridden
Lately in triumph through the city's gates;
And the crowd swayed and grew, while Jesus taught them.
Forth from the towering Temple came the priests,
The holiest, wisest, proudest of the town,
In their rich robes, which swept from step to step
As they moved down to send the crowd away.

" Room for the priests and elders! Make way, make way!"
They cried, and entered in the crowd about him.
There face to face came earthly dignity
And man's most vital spirit; pride of dust
Rebuked pure pride of truth, when they demanded
By what authority he spake these things?
He paused, this carpenter, surveyed the awe
Written upon the faces of the crowd,
Looked in the eyes of anger unafraid,
Knowing their bravery to betoken not
A wrath of judgment, but of fear to lose
The authority that birth or learning gave them.
What cared these men to know? Nothing of him!
Their words were but a feint to tempt a blow.
But he'd not strike it. " Tell me first," said he
In a low voice, yet overheard by all,
" Was John the Baptist heaven sent or not?"
A stir passed through the crowd, and every eye
Turned to the priests, to read their countenances.
Prophet or black impostor? Why, a shout
Of mutiny would shatter the last walls
Of their authority should they condemn him,
And second questions, begging to be asked,
Knocked at their understanding if they dared
Allow him sent by God. " We cannot tell,"
They shortly answered.
" Neither will I say
By what authority I do these things.
But I shall ask your valuable advice
About a certain householder who made
A vineyard, hedged it round about, and sunk

A wine-press there, and built a watchman's tower.
This vineyard being made, he let it out
To husbandmen, and went himself away
To a far country. But in vintage time
He sent his servants to the husbandmen
That they might have the fruits of that year's work.
These men by force detained his messengers,
And one they beat, one killed, another stoned.
So he sent other servants, more than at first,
But these they served alike, till last of all
He sent his son to them, his only son,
Believing 'They will reverence my son.'
But they, when they beheld him, plotted, saying:
'This is his heir: come, let us murder him,
And let us seize on his inheritance.'
Thus, then, they caught him, and casting him out
Beyond his father's vineyard, slew him there.
When the lord, therefore, of that vineyard comes,
What will he do unto those husbandmen?"
A simple question, this, of right and wrong,
That priests might safely answer. All the crowd,
Lost in their listening, woke again to hear
The learned men give judgment. "When he comes
He will destroy the robbers, obviously,
And let his vineyard out to honest men."
This all men heard, and all agreed; and Christ,
Looking upon the vestiges of pride
In those misplacèd priests, in anger retorted:
"Thus God, who is just, shall disinherit you.
Your fathers scorned and slew his ministers.
He stayed his anger; but the time shall come

When, those he sends being murdered, scorned, derided,
His justice must have vengeance. Out of hands
Stained with the blood of servants shall God reave
The vineyard of his planting. Look to this:
What you despise shall be exalted high,
And you and your blind pride of heart thrown down;
Nay, and this nation, whom it was his boast
To honour among men, to whom this land
Was given, for whom 'twas blest and fruitful made,
This nation loses now its place of honour,
And the wide world, the gentiles, and the Romans,
The sons of Esau and of Ishmael,
Shall have inheritance and realms in Heaven.
By what authority do *ye* demand:
By riches? custom? ancestry? by wisdom?
O wicked generation and perverse,
How will you stand, or how escape
The doom of truth, when justice shall be done?"
The crowd melted away, and silently
The sad thirteen moved on. But Jesus said
"Go, two by two, among them; go and teach;
Plead with them for the kingdom, and at evening
Meet me again. We'll sleep at Bethany
To-night. But do not think I give you leave
To rouse the people's anger; for passion kills.
Remember these were men, these priests, and pray
That their hearts may be opened. It is peace,
Sweet peace and patience that we preach, not wrath."
Then they went forth upon his business.

But who is this that touches Judas' sleeve?
The others lose themselves, but who is this
Bespeaks his ear a moment? Why, a priest,
Begging for conversation. What's his need?
Come, let us hear this anxious fellow.

PRIEST
"Why does your master thus betray himself?"

JUDAS
"Is this a thing to ask a friend avowed?"

PRIEST
"No, but you qualify your love, I hope,
With leaven of good sense. His power for good—
Who would deny it? But this slandering,
This snapping up of questions from men's mouths,
This turning all to ill, because a priest
Wears longer robes and speaks a purer speech,
Your moderation must deplore. I think,
Indeed, that in your looks I read
Some disapproval of his useless anger."

JUDAS
"Stranger, I'm not to answer for your thoughts:
You read whatever pleases you to read.
As for your question, Jesus speaks to priests
In anger such as this because he hates them."

PRIEST
"And you, I see, being his sworn follower,
Follow him in his hatred."

JUDAS

"There again
You speak, I say, more from your heart than mine."

PRIEST

"Why, then, you see his folly?"

JUDAS

"If I do
Am I to blab of it to every man?
What does it mean to yonder labourer
Whether I follow blindly or aware?
I follow—that, at least, you have averred!
The ins and outs of my discipleship
Belong to me and midnight. Are you answered?"

PRIEST

"Not I—the labourer is—but I seek more,
Therefore I came to ask; the rest, you see,
Passed by indifferent. I did not come
By chance upon some follower of his,
But heard the argument, and used my eyes
To choose a thinker, when I came to you—
In vain, as now I see, for you, too, doubt me."

JUDAS

"I doubt the air, the streets, the Temple walls,
The very sun sometimes. But if, indeed,
You would speak further, and in honesty,
I'd not refuse you. Can we talk alone?"
So saying, Judas looked upon the face
Of his enquirer, saw him young and bred
In learning and refinement—but no more,
Having but little art to read men's souls.

Else he might well have doubted. For the youth
Was one of bookish judgment, lacked the signs
Which sympathy or spiritual tears
Write early in the eyes, the lips, the looks
Of men of deeper humour. Handsome he
With beardless scorn, whose root was ignorance
Of all it scorned: not reason, not election,
But habit borrowed from a haughty school.
Yet when he spoke to win, as never else
He spoke, his cultured voice wore good disguises,
He understood, as snarers understand
The ways of birds, and neatly set his trap,
Saying:

PRIEST
"I know a booth that overlooks
The lower city. Shady there and cool
And quiet we may hope to be, for few
But water-carriers pass it. There I'll hear
More of this Jesus; more, if you will tell it,
Of you yourself, your judgments and your plans.
But here's the day before us; if but that
We may in quietness enjoy, and change
A word or two, we shall not lose the day."
When they were come to this resort of quiet,
Which hidden lay high up, beneath a spur
Of the great Temple wall, beside a tree
Gnarled and overhanging half the town—
The glozing Pharisee renewed his talk.

PRIEST
"This is a garden of rebellious thoughts

For such as we are. Herod's palace here,
Its rosy masonry, like some mirage,
(As truly stable) seems to rule the streets
Of cowering houses; the Pretorium there,
Rearing its Roman length and white arcades
Above the clustering roofs, though not so proud,
Defies the Temple that behind us shines—
What are they both but mockers of our state
Of former strength and honour? Sir, were you
Some travelling merchant from the East, and not
A secret subject of the fallen kings
Of Judah, would you not return to boast
Of this? How beautiful, not known how lost."

JUDAS

"Two fools in grief," said Judas, "little do
By dialogues of tears. You brought me here
For manlier thoughts, or sounder questions. Come, then—
The place is fair, even in its slavery—
But what of priests who see it, and are dumb?"

PRIEST

"We'll call them traitors. For a priest has cause
Above all others, to resent the shame
Idolaters impose."

JUDAS

"And yet," said Judas,
"Yet you demanded, with indignant show,
Why Jesus should reprove them, as he did
Most publicly to-day, to their confusion."

PRIEST

"O excellent disciple"—the youth smiled—

" You act the indignant loyalist, almost
Deceivingly; but trust me: Jesus wants
No advocate with me. I honour him,
Hold his philosophies, I think, as high
As his sworn followers do. I know him brave,
Wise, virtuous, inspired by heaven, with power
Over the variable hearts and passions
Of crowds. He has done much. But more, far more
Breeds in the time. He will not lift a hand
Against the oppressors—(who are not
The priests he rails at); lies not passive even,
But in his doctrines—doctrines, I dare say,
In theory impeccable—opposes
What every son of Jacob, from the sorest
Street beggar to the High Priest, Caiaphas,
Holds in his secret mind a sacred thing:
—I mean the cause of freedom by revolt."
He ceased, and fell to watching Judas' face.
As on the face of earth, when overhead
A sounding wind drives clouds across the bright
And swimming sun, the distant hills record
The gloom and gold of April, so on Judas
The hesitating darkness came and went,
Making obscure the fire of loyalty.
At length he spoke, his eyes upon the town:

JUDAS

" My master would reply that no man owes
His soul to Cæsar, or voluptuous Herod.
Rather manself is his own tyrant, whom
No mob with swords can conquer. To make strong
This inward royalty, this heritage

Of love alive, is all the wars he fights,
Or bids men fight. No other cause appears
That is worth the expense of victory to him,
Nor will he waste the generalship that's lent
Him out of heaven, on enemies of earth.
Death lays one tax on Roman or Judæan."

PRIEST

" Death lays a tax on locusts, lice, and frogs!
This talk of souls is capital stuff for schools;
Meanwhile the tyrants flourish, the poor starve,
Or are enslaved and fed, or become thieves.
We skirt the immediate issue: shall we rise
To take our own once more, or lower still
Sink in our new captivity? The air,
The very air, between us and our slaved
And ravished city cries this question out.
But one thing lacks—a leader.
Now hear me out with reason. This one need
Outvies all others, and I think, to serve
So great a cause, if we should seem to do
A little evil by necessity,
The sum of all, our freedom, makes all just.
This Jesus has a power that he may use
With men against the oppressor. Will he use it?
You say he will not. Yet the power he wields
Must find some exercise; it is a wind
Blowing, a tide marching, that must assist
Or hinder our adventure, if we launch.
We need the passions of the men he sways—
The labouring, unthinking multitude,
But all his personal force is bent against

This rousing up of angry loyalties;
He cries content, and bids them cherish the foes
And spoilers of their garden's liberty.
I say impartially I love the man;
But since his policy transgresses ours,
Since he pours water on the fires that we
Must feed, and by authority of tongue
Refutes the authority of custom, which
We need; then as impediment to our
Immediate victory, he must be removed.
We need but bind him till we all go free."
Surprise, contending honour, hooded thoughts
That spun about the half-revenge he dared
Not entertain, and blustering loyalty,
The caged lion's lust for action, each in turn;
Then love, and a man's admirable fond
Tenacity to losing causes; mood on mood
Made Judas slow in answering, until
The smooth conspirator began to expect
The unexpected, that the trap had closed.
But Judas did not pierce the mask he wore.

JUDAS

"Not personal hatred, then, but patriotism
Incites the Pharisees to oppose his preaching?
Friend, I have partly felt such arguments,
And have already spoken of these matters
With Jesus; but to little use, I fear.
You cannot win him to your cause, he speaks
Another and more heavenly dialect,
Steers by a star; thither his glances grow
So constant, that this rubble underfoot

Of Rome or No-Rome is forgotten. Cease,
Therefore, to attempt him. For my part
I hold your public love in honour, praise
Dispassionately what allegiance to
An older friend forbids my heart to hope;
Respect your confidence, and cannot help you."
He gazed abstracted over the sunny city
Beneath them—heard rise up the murmur of
The many purposed multitude below;
The echoing steps and solitary cries
That made the Temple building resonant,
He half attended while the priest again
Lightly replied. But when with scornful words
He named the motley of disciples, stole
A snake of envy, black and venomous,
Into the secret heart of Judas.

PRIEST

" . . . these assorted men,
Simpletons like their leader, but without
The fire of oratory, or the poet's spirit,
Lodging in him—what hopes of long success
Can they inspire in onlookers like us?
Are you the associate of tax-gatherers
And country fisher folk? Have you no spark
Of zeal, no tongue to woo and win
A crowd's loud reverence? Good Judas, hear,
I'll tell you the honest purpose of my words.
I'm an ambassador, sent first to you;
By whom, you know already, seeing my robes.
Sent first to you as being next in power—
Hardest but worthiest to be persuaded.

You will remember this. Remember, too,
That Jesus has no enemy but Cæsar,
Common to Israel." Judas answered not.
"As for yourself, charge not my office here
Against my friendship. I'm a lonely man,
Because I choose my friends. Farewell. If chance
Or time allows our further conversation,
Here, or against the steps, where I am lodged,
You will be welcome. Much in us we share."
He stayed no longer, but saluting Judas,
Who was dumb still, began to descend the steep
And rocky footpath; leaving Judas lost
In tumult, though to outward sense most calm.

EIGHTH BOOK

A Prelude of the Universal Theatre. . . . Judas leaves the Passover table and makes for the house of the young priest. He is hurried away by the priest, and presently given charge of a band of men and set on the road to Gethsemane. The kiss of betrayal is given and all but Judas leave the garden. In an ecstasy of remorse and terror Judas lies there long in the darkness, then stumbles down into a sheepfold, where he sleeps till dawn. By mental effort he keeps his thoughts upon matters far removed from his deed, until the noise of a shout reaches his ears from the city above him. Spurred by remorse then, he hurries to the Temple, hearing of the judgment against Jesus as he goes along; and, coming to the priests, he offers them the money that he had received from them last night. They meet him with cool scorn. He goes out of the city in the sunlight and before noon he hangs himself.

THE CROCUS in Judæa flames unchanged,
The lily flourishes, anemones
Redden the plains and pastures every year,
And nodding tulips still enjoy the spring there.
But man, how restless, how cast up and down
Since Pilate governed one provincial race
Under Tiberius! Unborn millions warred:
Saints and blasphemers, lakes of blood and tears,
Celestial visions and the perfumes of
The groves of God, have visited since then
This crowding earth, within whose body leapt
Even then, perhaps, our after races, stricken
With still reviving grief. Oh, never die
The echoes of Time! Who knew, on that small stage,
How the world watched, how cast its passions down
For their red feet to trample? All their fears
Grew since world wide enough; their private tears,
A score of centuries dry, dropt on the West—
A hemisphere undreamed by ruined Rome.

Behold a vast unbroken plain, an ocean
In its expanse, where all the races stand,
Million by million of the peoples, dead
Or living since that hour—their looks all fixed
Upon a massive pyramid that rides
Higher than faulty Babel over them all.
One man, one soul thereon they watch; a man
In tumult, though to outward show most calm.
The dust of his desires and passions lies
Clenched in his hand, ready to cast away.
And a gold balance trembles to his breath,

Level before him. Let him throw the dust
To left or right and overweigh the beam.
The world watches unknown. Long, long he shakes,
Silent in indecision. It is done.
Into the left the dust falls. Oh, no more!
The desert of humanity breaks forth
Into one howl of execration—all
Cry curses. He hears nothing, nothing sees
Of this, the congregation of times unborn;
But leans his hand against the Temple wall
And overlooks Jerusalem, fighting
Against his demon.
As some fugitive
Who has ventured at the bidding of a fiend
Further and further into dreadful lands—
Rank tangled sweating noonday darkness—comes
At evening, sick of his own company,
Upon a turbulent stream, where black and glassy
Waters seem to offer cool relief
To fevers of the air, endured too long;
As such a one might madly leap therein
To battle with the embracing currents, and sink
At last: So Judas to the torrent leapt,
The torrent of unreason, urged far more
By loathing of himself than hate of truth.
For when the Feast of Passover was held,
And Jesus sat at table with them all,
Judas, a silent envy, one of the twelve,
Felt the mad passion rise and master him.
His eyes beheld their love; he was enforced
To hear their protestations, their night fears

Of treachery; and every faithful word
Darkened his jealous spirit. At that time
All personal love lay blind within him, blind
If not quite dead, and he was calm.
Therefore when Jesus, who was pale with grief,
Spoke, saying, "One who sits at meat with us
Shall soon betray me." Judas rose and left
The rest, protesting "Master, is it I?"
As they protested, left in deadly calm
Those innocent accusers and their idol.
Evening it was, the streets through which he passed
Were almost empty, though the sun still hung
In perfect circle on the round hilltops.
To right or left not looking, yet he marked
The lizards on the weedy walls he passed,
And heard the crying of a baby, or
The shout of one boy to another. All
The world of minutes bit into a mind
Bent upon sick revenge; and he was calm.
For purpose, though so cruel, gave relief
To all the empty years of vacillation.
Up to the Temple steps he climbed, the spot
Where, but a day or two ago, he stood
To hear the priests rebuked, and at a door
Known to him since his foul temptation, he knocked.
The noise of laughter died within, as though
His hand, by its embittering touch, could slay.
The dying sunlight flushed upon the Temple,
And a dove laboured up on sounding wings.
None but he, and he whose heart was dead,
Entered the sloping street. He knocked alone.

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No answer, but the sudden stillness. Fail!
O pride, importune not the doors of Hell!
Within a darker place, thou hearest, hark,
Remorse begins its feeble battery,
Beating the door, imploring light of love
And honesty to open. Turn away
Before the turning be more difficult!
Even now within him madness may relent,
His hand trembles and knocks not again,
His heart trembles—but the door has moved,
Stands opened by the one he sought and feared.
Swift to his words (for now no turning back
But stabbed his pride of anger) Judas lent
The mask of carelessness. "It may serve your plan
To know that Jesus will withdraw to-night
From public places. He and a few friends
Will walk this evening in Gethsemane,
There might most easily and secretly
Be taken prisoner, if such need arose."
To this with full command of countenance
The young priest nodded and drew Judas in.
Oh, how unwillingly the traitor saw
The door close on him, locking in one room
Him and his treachery together, vile
And terrifying company. But yet
He thought to hold his own, not to betray
Himself also, before this callous thing;
Who whispered: "All's prepared. The place and hour
Are fortune's choice. We shall go quietly
And take him—not his followers, none but him.
I have some friends within; if you'll attend me

But a moment, I will excuse myself, and then
We may set out, and talk in safety. Wait!"
The shadows held but Judas. If one speaks
Beside the downfall of a cataract,
Words are made dumb and useless; so to him,
To Judas, were his thoughts. He could but frame,
Not hear them, for the rushing in his heart.
Mere minutes' absence was a year of clamour,
Therefore the priest's return, with keen unmoved
Possession of the simple acts to follow,
Seemed solacing, like sleep almost, that comes
When least anticipated, to seal up
(Where reason failed) the maelstrom of the mind.
He came, a calm comparative, and straight
They two were raising echoes down the street,
Bound for no goal of hope; but, brisk and sure,
They walked by the short zigzag of the town
To secret headquarters. No priest appeared,
Save the young guide, but a rough mob of men
With ugly arms to hand. These he addressed
In lively words, to Judas pointing them.
The rattle of their swords and staves, the dull
But eager murmur, Judas heard, and then
He felt the touch of night air on his cheeks,
Perplexing him. The youth was at his side,
The rabble at their heels. "Gethsemane!"
Said a low voice. And that way Judas turned.
From mouth to mouth it went. "Gethsemane" . . .
"Where are we going?" . . . "Gethsemane—not far" . . .
"The countryman who cleared the Temple court
Of moneychangers." If the dead do walk,

Judas was dead. He dared not comprehend.
But the young priest rallied him laughingly.
" Dare you go further? Let me tell these men
Their captain has a headache, and withdraws!
Dare you go further? You must go alone,
I cannot come into the garden with you."
"O peace!" cried Judas, "take your gibes away."
Then, turning to the followers, he cried,
"More speed, more speed!"—and led them on alone.
In bidding him farewell the young man pressed
A purse upon him in the darkness, saying,
" Here's earnest of your country's gratitude,
Proof you may need hereafter." Judas thrust
The money in his breast unconsciously,
And hurried forward, downward from the gate.

Sweet and gentle the night was, flower-like
The clear stars hung on that transparent sky,
And a cool breeze along the valley caressed
The Mount of Olives, stirring softest sound.
The city was a lovely sleeping thing
Behind their raking torches. Not a sound
Above their stumbling feet, but now and then
The sighing trees—which seemed, or might have seemed,
The breath of silence. They sank steeply down
Into the narrow foothold of the hills,
And steeply they rose up on the other side,
Where, dark on limpid darkness, shapes of trees
Grew from the grey earth, and their silver leaves
Shone with the ruddy and unusual light
Of moving fire beneath them. At a wall

They halted, at a gateway in the wall,
Under a giant olive-tree whose trunk,
Twisted by age, seemed in the light of flames
To writhe alive beside them. There they drew
Closer to Judas, waiting for his word.
He said: "The sign shall be a kiss I give:
Him whom I kiss, I mean, make prisoner.
Do it without a question. Leave your swords,
Unless they be provoked, dull in your hands.
Strike if you must, but outward, not at him.
And do not wait, for me, or any voice
That calls. Bring him away. The rest repel."
Judas passed through the gateway, and stood there
Listening, looking—a beast of ears and eyes.
Profoundest quiet, darker than the dark,
Pressed on his senses heavily. Then far
Among the crouching and invisible hills,
He heard the dogs go moaning cruelly.
He heard! But on the vacant inner night
Of his own coward soul he saw them pass,
Supple and swift and pale, in multitudes,
Skirting the hilltops under the sharp stars.
Then as this dies he hears the sound of men
In the garden talking. He moves. His villains move.
He sees them now, his prey, and waits no longer;
For madness laughs and even fear is cowed.

❧ ❧ ❧

Say that the night grows darker for an hour.
That kiss was poison! Oh, the clamour, the swift
Obedience, the waving of the flames;

One cry of pain, a comet over hell!
He is delivered, silenced; and they are gone.
The trees above wild Judas kill the stars,
But the world is horrible to be so empty.
Time is dead, and yet the torches climb
Between the branches. They are near the gate.
He flung himself upon the sand, and found
A root of grass to tear between his fingers.
It was all over now, that thing was done,
Which he had never dared to dwell upon
In daylight and dear reason. He must hasten,
Lest he be seen by daylight in this mood.
He rose and ran therefore; but faster ran
His threadless thoughts, and through Jerusalem,
Seeking the harmless eyes of ignorance,
His thoughts already saw him wandering, lost.
Revenge is never sweet, but it seems so
Beside the bitterness and maddening draught
Of active anger. Homeless, Judas knew
Himself; but others homeless offered him
Some dregs of comfort in this desert too;
Yes, the whole band of them, aspiring fools,
Lost by his simple act, fallen as low
As they had hoped to rise, prone with their hopes.
He turned away again, and sat till day,
In a deserted sheepfold, which he found
Upon the lower slopes. The worst was done.

Within three walls of mountain stones, the day
Discovered him asleep, and sent a lark
(For there are larks on earth) to waken him.

She climbed sheer upward into the full morning,
She minted morning into silver, cast
Her happy music down, from height to height
And joy to joy going up. But Judas slept.
She lost herself in brightness, hung in sky
Suspended, trilling, trilling, a loud sweet
Carelessness. And when he awoke, at first
He thought the hills his father's pasture-land.
Poor child! Foul traitor! In his fingers, too,
A scarlet-lidded bud, broken, but fast
As yet upon its roots, he had and held;
And on his heart, heavy and cold, he felt
The purchase-price of Jesus. For a while
He passively leaned back, like some one dead—
Aware of light, but numb; his mind aware,
His heart afraid to stir. Nay, when he arose
He laughed aloud, and saw his fingers count
The silver from the purse, the thirty pieces.
Yet without form or any name, a shadow
Stood between him and tall Jerusalem:
He held his eyes averted. If he looked
The shadow would approach. He must not, then,
He must not look that way, nor seem to see.
Kidron below him softly chattered past
Through the intenser greenness of its banks
Of grass and weeds. He fixed his thoughts with a will
On little unimportant matters, heard
In its low sound the low sound of the brooks
Of long ago, and saw, not present flowers,
But colours long since faded out of mind.
His veins were full of terror, yea, he knew

Its quicksilver, and fed his cringing heart
On bubble food, on little thoughts that burst;
But kept his back upon Jerusalem,
His face towards Kidron, and his hands, his hands
Upon the tinsel treasures of dead youth.
So one hour passed the next, and then a noise
Came sliding down the air, with loss to him
Of all that feverish and attentive power.
A shout diminished to a murmuring noise
It was, and Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, prisoner
Of hell and hate, must seem the only cause
To his distempered mind. Then glittering toys,
His conjured inoffensive past, like water
Fled from him headlong, and his curse awoke.

As on some glorious morning when the sun
Hangs clear above the dancing tips of trees,
A monstrous shadow of eclipse begins,
And sinking noonday darkness like a curse
Quenches the beauty, terrifies the eyes
Of them that watch and fear and know not why,
So treachery shuts the world from Judas,
Puts out the common light of beauty,
Corrupts his very seeing, makes remote
And thundery the city, blinds the sun,
Covers the flowers, and quells the sweet birdsong.
He labours darkly to the city gate,
Goes in upon the unconcernèd streets,
Looking in no man's eyes, for fear of Christ's.
But death is every paltry trader's talk,
And shameful torturing death. He stumbles in

At last before the priests assembled. Night
Is very deep above him while he cries:
"Here is the foul and poisonous prize you gave me;
Receive it, ye are worthy, bloody men.
I am consumed with venom of my sin.
For he is innocent whom ye condemn,
You know, ye wolves, that he is innocent
Whom I betrayed, I, I—" he offers them
The silver tokens of his heart's corruption.
But they, unmoved, answered contemptuously:
"What is all this to us, see thou to it."
The silver rang upon the holy floor,
Cast from his mortal hands. The crowd,
The gate, the tearless wilderness he sought;
And as he wandered, reckless and unhurt,
He spoke aloud, and listened and fell calm.
"I am the living curse before whom men
Grow cold and bitter. I am he whose love,
Which is the godliest quality of men,
Preys on the good, that pride may be full fed.
I dip my hands in putrefying sin
And can betray my friends to spice my love.
But in *my* power the cleansing of the world
Resides, and in me, Christ! in me alone
Dies the unnatural and deadly soul."
The valley cared not. It was not yet noon.
Three women stood on Kidron's other bank:
They could not come across, but stood perplexed
Surveying the brown water. Judas ran
And took a stone that man could hardly lift,
Then tumbled it upon the bank, and so

Into the shallowest water, that they might
Cross over without fear. When they had passed,
He also passed, and on and up advanced
Under the shadows of the hillside trees.
No eye dare follow. To the edge of death
He went, and thence looked out awhile
Across the world and wilderness of time:
"This thing I do," he said, "I do too late.
Ah, wilt thou have me?" Then a lovely wind
Went through the leaves, before the tree was shaken.
He heard it. Then hung dead and heard it not.

EPILOGUE

I FINISH this tale of trouble in the Spring,
In England when the trees with blossom fill
All day and night—clear day and patient night—
With scents, that are mnemonics of my youth.
O thou sweet earth, familiar part of me,
I know the order of thy loves, what leaves
Are due to appear, what birds to sing and build,
And when each flower speaks its next fellow's cue.
The celandines have called the primroses,
The primroses the broad dog-violet,
He the pale ladysmock, gross cuckoo-pint,
And daisies on the lawn—until the land,
Losing all count of flowers, from winter's stores,
That wardrobe of delight, unhooks the rich
Brocades of Maytime, and adorns herself
With coloured fold and falling robe of green.
All things are turned to beauty! Every leaf
Balanced to-day in ecstasy of life,
Passive to brilliant sun, owes winter all.
Not by mere contrast with December, not
By not being winter is May reckoned fair:
She is the frost's corollary, brings forth
Colours conceived in darkness, storm and tempest,
The flower of earth's long labour—best in that.
Pear blossom petals drop among my words;
As though with fingers of a child the wind,
The light wind, plays the corners of my page,
Or stealing comes that every kiss it lends
May seem surprising love, sweet noonday love

Frightened at nothing. Birds, too, have so long
Sung in the sunshine that, unless I stop
And think to listen, I remark them not.
Last night one singer silenced many miles.
It was the "newcome nightingale". He makes
Whoever hears for joy of sorrow cry,
With the mere beauty of his phrases; sings
Till all hearts echo Philomela's tale.
And here I heard him, when it fell too dark
To tell the petal from the page. I said
The stars stood by to hear him singing, and
The moon came up to hear—truth suffered this!
But something heard, because I felt the air
Intense with listening. Humans three or four,
Perhaps, within the circle of his power,
Felt then, as I, the everlasting tears:
Not in his heart, he sings more than he knows,
But in the common, mortal heart of men.

THE END

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